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T W O *from the Authors.*

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C H A R G E, &c.

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THE
C O N D U C T
OF THE
FIRST CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY,
CONSIDERED AND APPLIED,
IN A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED AT BRIDPORT,
ON THE TENTH OF JULY, 1788,
AT THE ORDINATION OF THE
REV. THOMAS HOWE.
By JOSHUA TOULMIN, A.M.

ALSO, THE
PERPETUITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
IN A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED AT RINGWOOD,
ON THE SIXTEENTH OF JULY, 1788.
AT THE ORDINATION OF THE
Rev. WILLIAM GELLIBRAND.
By ABRAHAM REES, D.D.F.R.S.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED, THE
QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO Mr. HOWE,
WITH HIS ANSWERS;

A N D
A C H A R G E,
DELIVERED ON BOTH THESE OCCASIONS.
By ANDREW KIPPIS, D.D.F.R.S. and S.A.

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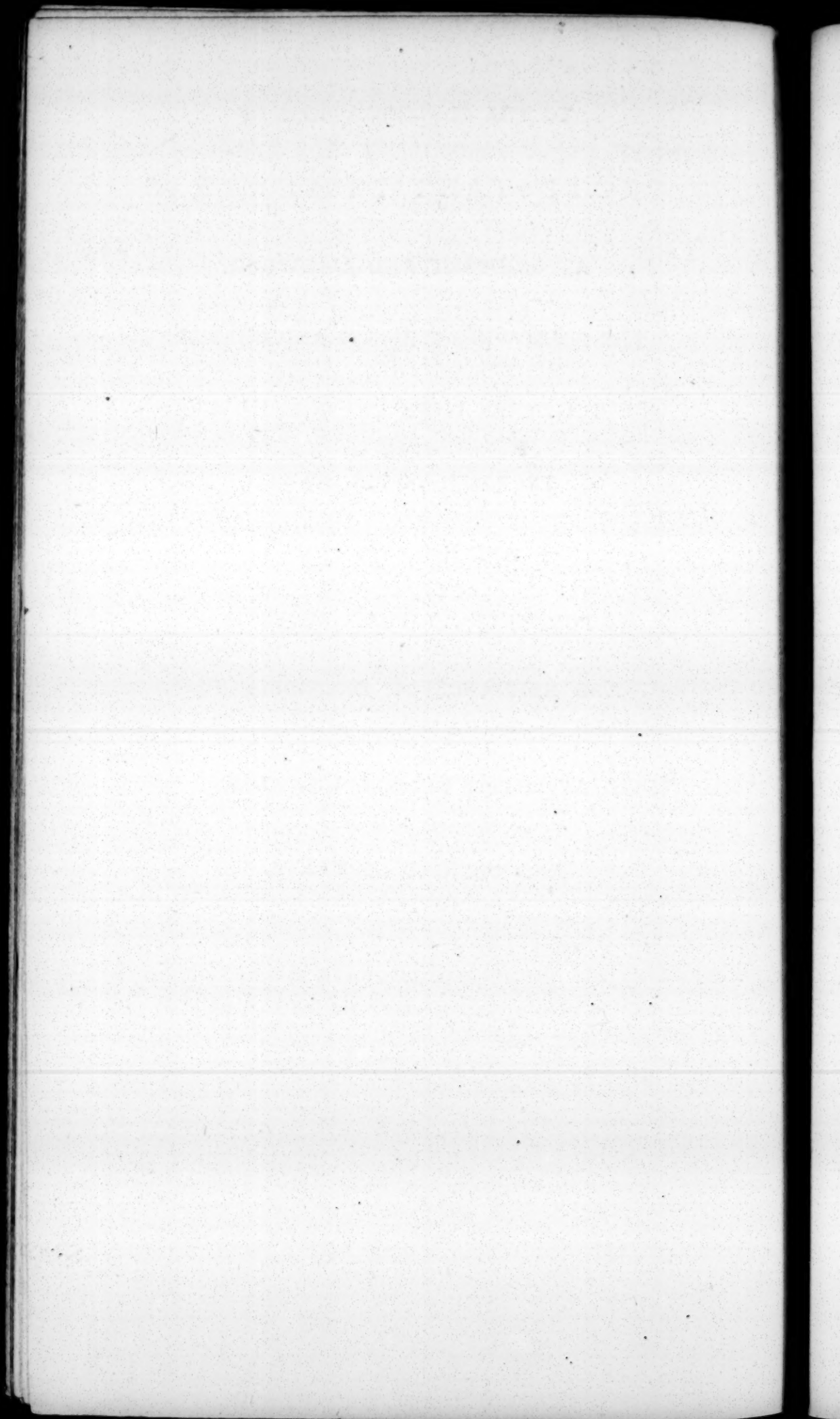
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TO THE CONGREGATIONS OF
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS
AT BRIDPORT AND RINGWOOD,
THE FOLLOWING SERMONS AND CHARGE,
TOGETHER WITH THE QUESTIONS
PROPOSED TO MR. HOWE,
AND HIS ANSWERS,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED, BY
THEIR AFFECTIONATE WELLWISHERS
AND OBLIGED SERVANTS,
THE AUTHORS.



A

S E R M O N, &c.

Permit me to bespeak the candor and indulgence of my Reverend Brethern and of this Audience, while with the sentiments of esteem and affection due to a society, amongst whom, in the early part of my ministry, I enjoyed the intercourses of friendship, and engaged in the services of my character, I request *their* serious regard to what may be offered from those words, which we find in

A C T S ii. 42, 46, 47.

And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer: And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.

MANKIND naturally wish, in every pursuit, for the aids and supports of society. Who is not desirous, in the arduous enterprize, of engaging others; that the difficulties of it may be divided,

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vided, and his own efforts rendered more easy and successful? Who is not fond, in the agreeable and prosperous undertaking, of communicating to others the benefits he hath obtained? When men act in concert, their emulation is kindled; their powers are whetted; their hands are strengthened; and their pleasures, by being circulated, flow back again into their own bosoms, with an improved relish.

Religion, as well as other objects of human attachment and pursuit, wants the succour of social connexions, and disposes the heart to open its feelings, its sentiments, and its joys, to others. When Andrew and Philip had met with Jesus, how naturally do they impart the important discovery to their nearest friends, and invite them to a share in the great blessing. No sooner do we read of the three thousand being converted by the preaching of Peter, but we find them acting together in sacred harmony, uniting in the same duties of devotion, and improving their social affections into pious friendship. “ They continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, and
 “ fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in
 “ prayer.—And they continuing daily with one
 “ accord in the temple, and breaking bread from
 “ house to house, did eat their meat with glad-
 “ ness and singleness of heart, praising God,
 “ and having favour with all the people.” “ And
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“ the Lord added to the Church daily such as
 “ should be saved.”

This is a pleasing and instructive view of the conduct of these converts; of the zeal which warmed their breasts; of the love which united their hearts: and it sets before us the happy effects of their deportment on the christian cause.

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, a man lately despised, rejected, and crucified by his own countrymen, but raised from the dead by the power of God; (of which the effusion of the spirit on the day of Pentecost was a convincing testimony); in his name there arises a society, of which the world furnished no model. It consisted not of a few enlightened and philosophic minds, whom an improved taste, cultivated manners, and the same studies had cemented; but of a great multitude, formed of men of various and remote nations, of different tongues, and of different religious parties. “ All these are closely united by the bonds of fraternal love; by the obligations of the most pure and active benevolence. They all have but one heart and one mind, that of their Founder. They all worship the Almighty in spirit and in truth.” Their business is devotion: their hearts dilate with love: their lips open in songs of praise. “ They eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” Their time is divided between the services of religion, and the entertainments of
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christian converse. There is no want or poverty; for those who had goods and possessions, chearfully sell them to divide the price to all, as every man had need. " We behold, as it were, a new, earthly Paradise: but the trees of it are *all trees of life*."*

These converts exhibited a wonderful and pleasing spectacle. It is easy to conceive, that they must attract the notice of mankind. And, drawing the eyes of men upon them, is it surprising, that these manners produced sentiments of esteem for the principles from which they arose? Is it strange, that the same graces, which conciliated the regards of men to themselves, should dispose others to embrace the faith which they had adopted? Rather was it not to be expected, that men affected, impressed, and charmed with a deportment so full of unfeigned love and chearful devotion,

* Peu de temps après la mort de l'ENVOYE, je vois se former dans un coin obscur de la Terre, une *Société* dont les Sages du Paganisme n'avoient pas même entrevu la possibilité. — Tous ses Membres sont *unis étroitement* par les lieux del' amour fraternel & de la bienveillance la plus pure & la plus agissante. Ils n'ont tous qu'une même Esprit, & cet Esprit est Celui de leur FONDATEUR. Tous adorent le GRAND ETRE en Esprit & en Verite, &c. En un mot; je crois contempler un nouveau Paradis Terrestre; mais dont tous les Arbres sont des *Arbres de Vie*. Recherches Philosophiques sur les Preuves du Christianisme: Nouvelle Edition, par C. Bonnet, a Geneve, 1770, p. 385, 6.

devotion, should be ready to believe that God was with them of a truth : nay, should be desirous of joining themselves to so holy, benevolent, and happy a community.

How different was this scene, which the Apostles were the great instruments of introducing, from that prospect which they had entertained concerning the first establishment of Christ's kingdom. Their ambition had indulged the hope of filling some high posts of honour and power in a temporal kingdom. Their imaginations had looked forward to the time, when they should be employed under the standard of their master, to carry through the world the triumphs of his sword. They do, indeed, triumph in the name of their master. They do enlist subjects to his scepter. They do see the kingdom of Christ opening, and thousands flocking into it. But no sword is unsheathed : no throne is erected : no banners are displayed.

The weapons of their warfare are spiritual; the words of truth and grace, and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. They find themselves not at the head of armies, but, sitting on the bench of teachers ; unfolding the doctrine of salvation,—followed and listened to with an attention that Philosophers could never merit, nor Scribes ever command. They see societies forming, whose
law

law was love: whose immunities were divine grace and forgiveness of sins; and whose hope was eternal life. They see Jews, strangers and proselytes, the inhabitants of Judea, and foreigners from remote regions, yielding to the authority of their exalted Lord; and laying aside all distinctions, attached to one cause, and united by one spirit.

These are the triumphs of truth, grace, and love. Here, not bodies are enchained, but souls are subdued. Here, these holy men of God perceive themselves employed to bring about a revolution in the religion and morals of the world, which philosophy could never effect; a revolution which was the light and glory of that age, and which would spread to the ends of the world, and reach down to the end of time. "How glorious an earnest of the future success of the Gospel! How great an encouragement to the Apostles in all the difficulties they were to encounter, observes an excellent man, and how convincing a proof to all ages of the truth of the faith, which in its first operations was so powerful."*

If, from this scene, we turn our eyes to view the present state of christian societies, have we not occasion to lament a great declension from this
spirit

* See Dr. DODDRIDGE's Family Expositor. v. 3. in loc. *The Improvement.*

spirit of piety, zeal, and love? These early converts, it is allowed, were addressed by wonderful manifestations of divine power in the gifts of the Spirit; which addressed all their senses, and arrested their attention to the word of salvation. They acted under the force of uncommon and lively impressions. The novelty, as well as importance of the doctrine, tended to occupy their thoughts with delight: the singularity and difficulties of their profession contributed to cement their souls together.

But is the operation, is the energy of their devotion and benevolence to be resolved wholly into the influence of present wonders, and of recent impressions? Is nothing, is not much to be ascribed to the nature and truth of the things they had heard? To the divinity and weight of the doctrine they had embraced, as the WORD OF GOD, and the WORD OF SALVATION? What can time diminish from the sublimity, truth, and importance of our holy faith? "Jesus," or the Gospel, "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It always supplieth just grounds for a devout attachment, for a glowing zeal.

After a due allowance for every difference of circumstances, the conduct of these believers furnishes a model for Christian Societies through all ages; a model of the spirit which should actuate their hearts, and of the manners which should
adorn

adorn their profession. Let me, then, recommend to Christian Churches an imitation of these first Christian Societies. It is with this view, that the subject hath been chosen; to this point, what has been said particularly and forcibly applies.

Let Christian Societies be admonished to persevere in their attendance upon the institutions of the Gospel—To cultivate the spirit of love—And to aim at a purity of manners, that may command respect and conciliate favour.

1. Let them persevere in their attendance upon the Institutions of the Gospel. That the profane and vicious, or such as scarcely carry their views and thoughts beyond this world, should neglect the ordinances of religion, is not surprising: but that believers, that persons professing godliness, and the candidates for eternal life, should forsake the assemblies of the Saints, is not to be reconciled to any principles. It is incompatible with the consistency of their own characters: it is subversive of the interests of christianity; and it is repugnant to the directions of the New Testament.

Is it not very natural, is it not highly necessary, that such as have the same avowed object in view, should often meet together to promote it? As Christians, the common Salvation is our end and hope. For this you give your names to a Christian Society; for this you choose a Minister to be
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the helper of your faith and joy ; for this an honour hath been set upon the Lord's day ; for this Churches have been erected ; for this is the table of the Lord covered with its provisions But all these means of advancing this great object are defeated, by our neglect of Christian institutions and worship.

Was it by remissness, with respect to social devotion, that the first converts were built up a spiritual house, an holy priest-hood? No. They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and were stedfast in attending upon the instructions of the Apostles, and in acts of Christian communion. The reason was, that *they* felt the truth of the religion they had embraced ; they derived their noblest delights from its religious services ; and they were earnest in their holy profession. Shame to the languor of our piety ; shame to the weakness of our faith, from whence proceeds our neglect of the day, and of the house of the Lord !

Were the Ministers of Religion to desert *their* posts on the Lord's day, for the same reasons, which prevail with others to forsake the assembling of themselves together, their conduct would be justly deemed highly criminal and pernicious : but is not the same conduct, in a proportional degree, criminal and pernicious in the *people* as in them? Be it *their* duty to teach, is it not that of their flocks, to receive the word of exhortation?

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Be it *their* duty to lead Christian devotions, is it not that of others to go up to the house of the Lord, to unite in its prayers and praises? Christians and Ministers owe this to each other. It is a more weighty consideration, that they owe it to their common Lord and Saviour; to the honour and spread of his cause. Though by private reading, and by secret devotion, our personal improvement and salvation may be carried on, yet Christians should consider what they owe to the edification of others, and should reflect upon the usefulness of Christian ordinances to the preservation and influence of the Gospel in the world.

Our religion is built upon certain great facts, the life and ministry, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no way of perpetuating the remembrance of facts, but by written records, or by sensible memorials and emblems of them. Written records some cannot read; many will not consult, especially, when having been long in the hands of men, they are supposed to offer nothing, but an old story, to invite to a perusal. Sensible memorials come in aid of the defects and inefficacy of books; speak, when the latter would not be looked into, arrest attention, and come home to the conceptions and feelings of men. By public worship on one day out of seven, and by the Lord's Supper, men are led to enquire, what mean these things?—And to reflect upon their own
concern

concern in them. But can the institutions of religion have their effect, unless they be seriously and regularly observed?

When the first converts continued stedfast in their attendance upon the Apostles' preaching, in communion and prayer, and were knit together by zeal and love, then daily were added to the Church such as should be saved. It is by your constancy and fervor, not by your indifference and lukewarmness, with respect to Christian ordinances, that you can hope to see your Societies increase and flourish.

Or should you not be the happy instruments of drawing others over to piety and faith, you may promise yourselves *this*,—that, by these means, you will preserve the knowledge and practice of religion in your own families; a motive, which goeth with peculiar force to the hearts of parents. What do we not ourselves owe, in this respect, to the piety and holy customs of our ancestors? To this measure, to their religious regularity and seriousness in carrying us up to the house of the Lord, under a divine Providence, we owe it; that religion exists among us, and that our hearts have felt its power. In short, the more serious, the more constant, the more conscientious we are in the duties of christian communion, the more earnest will appear our pursuit of the end; to the greater perfection will our christian and devotional

character be raised ; the more striking and effectual will be the witness, which we hereby afford to the cause of God, and the Redeemer. Let me exhort you again :

2. To cultivate a spirit of love. With what endearments were these early converts united ! What a beautiful concord prevailed among these thousands of believers ! How generously did they minister to each other's wants ! What an union of affection and zeal, in the common cause, did they display ! This is the true Christian spirit which should dwell in every heart, and reign through every society. We are not, it is true, called to sell our possessions, and to cast the produce into a common Bank ; the necessities of the times do not require it. Shall we then account it difficult to make any lesser sacrifices for mutual edification, for promoting a common interest ?

As Christians, that common interest is the knowledge and practice of the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ ; as Protestant-Dissenters, it is the support of liberty, of conscience, and free-enquiry, in opposition to all human authority in religion —and the maintenance of a *scriptural worship*, in opposition to the inventions of men, especially as to the *object* of our worship, *one divine Being or Person*, ONE GOD, the FATHER of all, the *God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, through this *one Mediator*,

*Mediator, the man Christ Jesus.** Can a Society act with vigour and success in the prosecution of these, or of any other ends ; can it command respect and influence with others, if animosities and hatred, and jealousies prevail in it ?

Alas ! that men should bring their little, secular competitions, their private animosities, into the concerns of religion, into the service of truth and of God ! Alas ! that because they will not brook to worship with an offending brother, they should desert their place, and perhaps, sacrifice their principles, by joining in a worship, against which, not only their former habits militate, but at which their conscience revolts. Is this to “ be angry and sin not ? ” Is this to “ study the things that make for peace, and the things wherewith to edify one another ? ” Can the prayers which are accompanied with alienated affections and discordant hearts, ascend from any place, with acceptance to the God of love and peace ?

Where enmity and discord prevail, we sympathise with the Pastor of such a Society. We pity him under the grief which depresses his heart. We sorrow with him, on account of the tears which

* It is the conviction that the true object of religious worship, is God the Father *only*, that in a great measure makes us *Protestant Dissenters*. Let us keep on this ground. It is impossible we should find better.

Dr. Price's Sermons on the Christian Doctrine, p. 101, 102.

which he privately sheds over such as bite and devour one another. We feel for the difficulties of the part he has to act in his friendly intercourses with those who wish for the opportunity of laying before him their accusations of a brother, and making him a party in their quarrels. But if we feel for *him*, what emotions of concern and grief may we not indulge, for those sons of strife themselves? For the inconsistency and guilt of their temper, there is much reason to grieve; for their acceptance with our divine Master, the Prince of peace, and their future state, there is much reason to be alarmed.

But why should we dwell upon these things? "Methinks, (to use the words of a respected friend on such an occasion as this) I hear a solemn whisper spreading through this assembly, gently communicating the fixed purpose of every heart; for the honour of God and Christ, and the success of Gospel ministrations, we are determined, there shall be no dissensions among us; no enmity of heart one towards another, or towards Christians of any other Society; no strife or contention, unless it be who shall excel in faith and holiness; who shall be most like their God and Redeemer in doing good, and adorn the doctrine of the Gospel by the most amiable conversation." "*That*, my Fellow-Christians, is an innocent strife! *That* is a truly glorious contest! It will occasion no alienation

ation of affection ; but fan a flame of sacred love in your hearts, which will consume all mean and earthly passions, and refine and perfect those that are excellent and divine*."

Lastly, Let innocence, simplicity, and virtue, adorn your profession of religion. It is recorded, to the honour of the first converts, that their virtue conciliated the favour of the people. To make men benevolent, upright, and holy, is the great end of the Gospel ministrations. Every time we assemble together, we give our testimony in favour of virtue and piety. We profess, that we have views beyond this world. For what are the instructions we hear, but lessons of humility, sobriety, integrity, and all virtue ? What are the prayers which we offer up, but fervent requests that we may be transformed to do the perfect and acceptable will of God ? What is the language of our attendance at the table of the Lord, but that we are the Disciples of the holy Son of God, separate from sinners ? What is the true honour and glory of any religious Society, but that they worship the Maker of all Things, according to the purity and simplicity of the Gospel ; and that they live soberly, righteously, and holily in this present world ?

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* Wright's Sermon at the ordination of Rev. Isaac Smith, at Sidmouth. June 24, 1778, p. 30.

It is then, for the credit and usefulness of their profession, to be devoutly wished, that Christian Societies, by the purity of their characters, and brightness of their virtues, may shine as lights in the world. They should carry their views much further than to the temporary purposes, and transient acts of social worship. The life, the life must contribute to give these their full efficacy. The Apostles, therefore, in their epistles, are very full and very earnest in their exhortations to every kind of righteousness and virtue. Permit ye, Christians, the word of exhortation; permit ye the earnest persuasion to abound in good works.

There is the more need, in the present times, for holding up to Christian professors, their obligations to peculiar sanctity and virtue; because, through the liberality of the age, and the occasions of life, there is much more free and unrestrained intercourse, than there probably was, in the first age of the Gospel, or than there certainly was in that of the old Dissenters, between men of very different principles and characters. Persons professing godliness, mingle with the world at large; happy is it, if they do not learn its ways. It is certain, that from such intercourses they insensibly fall into the language of the world; for they are apt to use the name of the most High lightly and irreverently; and they contract the taste of the world; a taste for splendor and show
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in the mode of living ; a taste for amusements and *play*, which dissipates serious thought, if it do not ruin the fortune. This is the natural consequence of the partiality we feel for those with whom we converse, and of a desire to render ourselves agreeable to them. It is to be lamented, that, by these means, the Christian is often lost in the man of the world. Such is the effect of human weakness and imperfection ; but the principles and hopes of faith should fortify us against the snare.

Let the simplicity of your manners, Christians, be untainted by the vices of the age. Let your sublime faith lay a foundation for the practice of every manly and useful virtue. Let your high and heavenly destination, as the sons of God, and as advocates for piety in the world, render you superior to levity and dissipation. Let the members of Christian Societies be mindful of the peculiar and sacred character they support : whatsoever things will communicate a dignity, whatsoever things will add a glory to it, let them think on these things.

Upon this conduct, your own comfort, your own salvation depends. Motives more interesting cannot well be proposed. But the subject, of which I treat, holds forth these duties in a peculiar light of importance and weight ; namely,

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their connexion with the spread and advancement of the Christian cause. This is the end of Christian Societies. The object of your association is truly benevolent and momentous ; infinitely more momentous than are the views that can be proposed by any philosophical or civil Societies.

All that the most diligent faithful Minister can do, will be ineffectual without your concurrence. If you really mean, or wish to promote the things of Christ, and the salvation of others, you must act along with your Ministers ; procuring respect for their ministrations by your own candid, regular, and serious attendance upon them ; diffusing sentiments of piety by your devout fellowship in the duties of Christian worship ; encouraging one another by mutual affection and friendship ; and displaying the power of the Gospel in the purity of your lives and benevolence of your temper. Without all this, our labours, our studies, and preaching must be, to a great degree, in vain.

Your absence from the house and table of the Lord weakens and dispirits us. It is an hurtful example ; it looks as if you did not think that there was much importance in the things of the kingdom of God ; or that they deserved so much attention as formerly Saints, Prophets, and Apostles bestowed upon them. You cannot hope to draw the attendance of others upon the Ministers whom
you

you yourselves frequently forsake. Discords and animosities must be subversive of all your interests as a Christian Church. And vicious indulgencies, injustice in your dealings, irregularity of manners, sensuality and covetousness will bring your profession of religion into discredit, will fix a stigma of reproach on the Christian Society to which you belong, will give a fatal wound to the cause of truth, and will expose piety itself to be considered as base hypocrisy or useless ceremony.

As *men*, formed for the knowledge and worship of God our Maker; as *Christians*, lying under a common obligation to provoke one another to love and good works, it becometh you to adopt those measures of religious edification and pious zeal, that have been now recommended. But there is another character, under which you are this day addressed, that giveth these considerations additional weight;—It is that of PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.

If the name can, with propriety and reason, be applied to you, your appearance in the cause of religion proceedeth from conviction; your profession of piety is not the effect of national custom, but of serious judicious *choice*. Your aim, besides that of preserving the spirit of piety in your own hearts, or the cause of religion in the world, is to stand fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made you free, and to recover Christianity from

the gross corruptions*, that have disguised and enervated it, to its original purity and simplicity. You have a particular and marked character, which attracts the notice and observation of the world. Your Ministers are those of your own election, and to whom you voluntarily pledge your support and friendship. They must appear to you in a truly respectable light ; as men, who, for the sake of truth, free enquiry, and a good conscience, expose themselves to many inconveniencies, and forego the emoluments of an establishment.

These views of your situation point out the peculiar obligations to harmony, to purity of life, to regularity and fervor of devotion, under which you lie. These circumstances evidently demand peculiar attention, union, and ardor. Follow the course that has now been laid down, you will encourage your Ministers, who need all the encouragement and friendship you can afford them : you will make a dissent appear honourable in the eyes of the world : and you will greatly contribute to advance practical piety and religious truth. These are things, for which it is worth while to sacrifice much, and to exert ourselves vigorously.

Permit

* The reader, who would trace out the corruptions of christianity, will do well to read the learned and valuable work of Dr. PRIESTLEY, on this subject ; which will, by its intrinsic merit, rise superior to the ungenerous attacks that have been made upon it.

Permit me to hint here, that neither can rational, practical piety be promoted, nor religious truth be advanced, unless you keep your minds open to instruction and conviction; unless you allow, and even invite your Ministers to lay before you, freely, the result of their religious studies, and serious, impartial enquiries. From the offence that many take, at the freedom with which their Ministers deliver their sentiments on virtue and truth, one would think, that they desire to be fostered in their prejudices, and supported in their vices; to be kept in ignorance and error. Such Christians think, that they have already attained to the utmost correctness of sentiment, and are already perfect. But this opinion of themselves is not the effect of modesty, nor the dictate of wisdom. To wave, however, this topic, and to bring all that hath been said to one point.

If there be any particular circumstance, or occasion, from which these considerations can derive more force than they possess in themselves, it is from the services of this day. Allow me to appeal to you, my friends, who constantly assemble here: allow me to refer it to your serious judgment and conscience, whether these services do not convey and inculcate such sentiments. By the transactions of this day taking place at your desire, do you not express your fervent, devout wishes, that henceforth, a peculiar and sacred connexion

connexion may subsist between you and your Minister? On the side of your Minister, the purposes which he avoweth, and the prayers offered up on his behalf, have a reference to *his* future exertions in the cause of truth and religion. Hath not your concurrence in these services a like reference to *your* future endeavours in the same cause? Doth not the *ordination* of a Minister to any particular body of Christians, shew, that those Christians are united together in the prosecution of some great design, in which they wish him to help and preside? Doth it not show, that this design lieth near to *their* hearts? Doth it not point out their future duty? Nay; doth it not, in a sense, bind their consciences, to keep united together upon this plan—to act with zeal and fervor—to be at peace among themselves—and to favour, assist, and advance the labours of their Minister amongst them; labours, which are designed, not only for their own benefit and salvation, but to transmit the knowledge and power of the Gospel to the rising generation, and to spread the favour of it around them.

Carry not these appeals conviction to your hearts? Is it not the fixed purpose of your minds, to fulfil all these duties, which as friends to religion, and as friends to your Minister, you owe to one another; which you owe to the common cause of that divine faith you are mutually bound to support?

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But, I ought to check myself, considering before whom I speak; before a congregation, whose kind, respectful, and generous behaviour to their late worthy Minister, the excellent Mr. WATERS*; whose general character hath given a convincing proof, that the sentiments, now inculcated, are felt by them, and have over *them* their genuine influence. Let the usefulness of stirring up

* Mr. George Waters, was the son of the Rev. Mr. Waters, a worthy and learned Dissenting Minister, settled some time at Falmouth, in Cornwall, and then at Ashburton, in Devonshire, where he died. He was the author of a Critique on Phil. iii. 7-21. in the Theological Repository, v. 2. p. 83:—and of a New Version and Paraphrase of the 139th Psalm, in the 3d volume of that work, p. 291, &c. His son received his Academical learning first under Dr. Jennings and Dr. Savage; and on the death of the former, in the year 1762, under the latter gentleman, in conjunction with Dr. Kippis and Dr. Rees. In the year 1766, he left the Academy, and soon after settled at Bridport, where he was ordained 17th August, 1769, with the Rev. Wm. Youatt, settled at Dulverton, in Somersetshire, since dead. Mr. Waters was a pattern of singular industry in his preparations for the pulpit, of great prudence and decorum of character, of distinguished modesty, humility, and piety. He died in the fall of 1787. For several years preceding his death, he was severely afflicted with a scorbutic rheumatism, which frequently incapacitated him for his public services, and wholly for ascending the pulpit; so that he was obliged to go through all the duties of the Lord's day sitting, and in a pew. This painful dispensation of Providence gave *him* an opportunity of displaying an exemplary fortitude and resignation; and the *congregation* he served, an opportunity of shewing their kindness and attention.

up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, be my apology for bringing these sentiments into a review at present.

To conclude, let us all be prevailed on to take these things into very serious consideration. Be exhorted to hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering; be united together in the bonds of affection and peace; be pure and exemplary in your manners; consider one another to provoke to love and good works; "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is;" but, "exhorting," encouraging and strengthening one another; "so much the more as you see the day approaching;" that great and solemn day which the progress of our years rapidly brings on, when Jesus, our master and friend, whose we are, and whom we serve, shall be revealed again from Heaven, to approve and reward every act of piety, and every labour of love, for his name.

As servants, who wait for their Lord's coming, be diligent, that "you may be found of him, without spot, and blameless;" active for his honour, and faithful to his cause. JOYFUL and TRIUMPHANT will be the meeting of genuine, zealous, faithful Disciples, with their respected, beloved, approving MASTER, whose reward is with him. Amen. "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Amen.



THE PERPETUITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

A

S E R M O N, &c.

MATTHEW XVI. 18. *Latter Part.*

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church;—AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

THE being and prosperity of the Christian Church must be important and desirable objects in the estimation of all, who have any concern for the present or eternal interests of mankind. If this declines, religion and virtue, so essential to the welfare of individuals and of public communities, will languish and decay of course, lose their credit and influence, and give way to licentiousness of principle and profligacy

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of manners. The Christian Church, from the time of its first establishment, has been the great bulwark and support of true piety and goodness. To this we have been more indebted than we are always ready to apprehend or own, for our security and welfare in every private capacity, and in every social connection and relation. Whence have we derived our religious knowledge, liberty and peace? What has restrained the impetuosity and violence of selfish and malignant passions? what has enforced the important obligations of mutual justice and benevolence? what has contributed to render men peaceable and useful members of the community to which they belong? To what are we to ascribe the decorum and order that subsist in the several ranks and subordinations of society, and the influence of education, example, authority and law, with which our safety and happiness are inseparably connected? To what do we owe those consolations and hopes, that adapt themselves to every stage and condition of human life, and that are our best support under the vicissitudes of time, and in the prospect of eternity?—The principles and sanctions of the Gospel, perpetuated in the Christian Church, and in a considerable degree informing the judgment, and influencing the temper and conduct: *these* may be justly reckoned among the chief sources of the invaluable benefits we enjoy, both as individuals and as members of society.

society. Should it be said, that ignorance and superstition, fraud and violence, impiety and vice, have prevailed even in the *Christian* world; and that the light of the Gospel has been obscured, and its efficacy restrained by the prejudices and passions of its votaries: we readily allow it, and have great reason to lament, that the actual influence of Christianity has not corresponded to its excellent and benign nature and tendency. However, although it has not produced *all* those good effects, and to *that* degree, which we might expect or wish, has it had no influence at all? Have we no reason to imagine, that the world would have been in a worse state of ignorance and moral depravity, without the discoveries and sanctions of the Gospel? If there had been no extraordinary revelation, and men had been left to the unassisted use of their natural faculties; how slow and joyless must have been their progress in investigating either the rule of their duty, or sufficient motives to the practice of it! Do we not find, in fact, that errors and superstitions of the most unwarrantable kind, maintain their being and influence in those countries, where the light of the Gospel has not yet penetrated? And if human nature continues so depraved, and the passions of men are so ungovernable, notwithstanding all the principles and restraints of Christianity; what, may we not fairly conclude, would

have been the state of the world in general, without the knowledge and the advantages it affords?

Compare the conduct of men with the rule by which they ought to walk, and it appears very irregular and faulty: but if they had no rule at all, or if there were no sanctions to enforce it, they must be much more depraved and profligate. Human authority and temporal penalties must have had a very limited and partial operation.

The *perpetuity* of the Christian Church is, therefore, an inestimable blessing. The character and influence of those, who are its sincere members, have an excellent tendency to discountenance and restrain profaneness and vice, and to promote the practice of universal virtue and goodness. In this view they are the excellent of the earth; they preserve the existence and privileges of the community to which they belong: and they furnish the most powerful restraints and motives to correct the degeneracy, and to advance the holiness and felicity of mankind. How important and valuable is the promise of the text, which ensures the duration of the Christian Church to the end of time! *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

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The Greek word, which is here, and in other places, translated *hell*, strictly denotes the *invisible world*; and by the *gates of hell* we may understand the entrance or passage into the unseen and future state. This is the sense in which the same expression is used by the Greek writers; and if the present were a proper occasion, we might alledge a great number of authorities to this purpose*. The gates of *αἴθρῃς*, or the invisible state, is an expression very familiar with the ancient writers, both sacred and profane, and import the same with the gates of death and of the grave. The words, thus explained, supply us with a very important and comprehensive doctrine. The Church of Christ stands on an immoveable foundation. Death, with all its apparent triumphs and horrors, cannot prevail against it. One generation of Christians shall arise after another to supply its vacancies, and to perpetuate its existence and its glory. Although the passage into an unseen world is much frequented; though it is attended with terrors that may lead the most established Christians occasionally to doubt and tremble; though the dominion of death seems to be unlimited and perpetual: yet the Church of the Redeemer shall remain and flourish through successive ages of frail and mortal men; and all those, who are its genuine members, shall be rescued from the mansions

* See Whitby and Doddridge in loc.

mansions of the grave, and be glorified with their risen and exalted Saviour in the day of his triumph.

Having thus explained what seems to be the precise and proper meaning of our Lord's declaration, we may observe

- I. That the promise, thus understood, conveyed very seasonable relief to the apprehensions and fears of the apostles in the view of their Master's crucifixion and death.

This was a very suitable introduction to the discovery which he was soon to make of his approaching end. For we read, that from this time, *Jesus began to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.* And we find, that this affecting discovery alarmed the fears of the apostles, armed as they were against it by the promise which our Lord had just delivered : for *Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee.* They were ready to apprehend, that the death of Christ would defeat all their hopes and expectations ; and that his kingdom would terminate with his life. A crucified Redeemer could be no longer the object of their trust;

trust; and all their flattering prospects would meet a fatal disappointment at the cross and grave of their Prince and Saviour. What would become of them and of their cause, when he, who was the life and soul of it, shared the fate of an impostor? How unequal were they to the arduous task of reclaiming and reforming the world, without the presence and concurrence of their divine Prophet and Master? Would they be able to support or propagate the credit of a religion, whose founder endured a cruel and ignominious death; and against which the prejudices and powers of the world were united in a formidable confederacy? The view of this event, apparently so injurious to their honour and influence, would dispirit and confound them; and they would incline to give up all for lost, when they were bereaved of their Lord and Master. The last scene of his life would lead them to imagine, that all his promises were delusions, and that the congregation of his apostles and disciples must be left to share the fate of their prince and leader.

In order to fortify them against these conclusions, and to inspire them with resolution and courage in the view of his sufferings and death, he assures them, that his church was founded on a rock, and that the gates of the invisible world—that death itself should not prevail against it. His own death, however threatening and discouraging

raging it might appear, would not be the ruin of *his cause* nor of *their hopes*. They would soon find, that he had *power to lay down his life, and to take it again**;—that death and the grave were subject to his controul, and could detain him only during pleasure. Hence they would be able to infer, that events which might at first view seem unfavourable to their credit and interest would in the issue conduce to their reputation and success.

II. The declaration of the text was not only a relief to the Apostles, and first disciples in the view of their Lord's death; but an excellent and powerful incentive to their perseverance, whatever might be the dangers and trials to which they *themselves* would be obnoxious.

It is as if our Lord had said: “the being and prosperity of my Church and interest do not depend on human skill and power. You, indeed, are honoured as instruments of preaching and propagating my religion in the world. The service in which you are engaged is arduous and trying. You will meet with many difficulties and discouragements—Your enemies may pursue you with unrelenting malignity, and constrain you to seal the truth of your testimony with your blood. In such circumstances, you may tremble
for

* John x. 18.

for yourselves; and tremble to a greater degree for the welfare of those, with whose instruction and salvation you are intrusted.—But be not afraid: as you may be assured of an ample recompence for yourselves; you may safely trust the cause in which you are embarked to the wisdom and power of its founder. Though you are removed from a scene of useful labour by an untimely death; God will raise up a succession of those, who shall take up and prosecute your charge, and enlarge the boundaries of his Church. When you see one another apprehended and condemned, be not discouraged or dismayed. When your course of service is ended, do not imagine, that your labour is lost; or that it shall lose its reward; or that God will fail to send forth faithful labourers into his harvest. Your sufferings and death, instead of obstructing the progress of my religion, will contribute to promote it. Your blood will be the seed of my Church: it will conduce to its honour, to the increase of its members, and to the confirmation of those who already believe. So far from involving it in any disgrace or danger; your death will establish its foundation, lay it open to more general view and examination, excite a spirit of emulation, in those who succeed you, and be productive of benefits, more general and much more durable than your continued life. By dying at the call of God, and in attestation

to the truth of his doctrine, you will convince the unbelieving, that the principles from which you act are excellent and important; and by illustrating their power in that trying season, you will teach others how to die, and whence to derive the choicest supports in the agonies of death. You will render the passage into an unseen state more easy and familiar, and disperse those horrors, which distress the believing and upright in their last moments."

To this effect was our Lord's instruction to his apostles by the declaration of the text; *the gates of the invisible world shall not prevail against my Church*. So far from prevailing against it, they shall serve to increase its lustre, to perpetuate its being, and to enlarge its spread and influence.

III. The words of the text more generally imply, that the Christian Church shall subsist and prevail through succeeding ages, notwithstanding the encroachments and depredations of death.

As Christians of one age have sunk into their graves, a new harvest has sprung up in the next. *One generation passeth away and another cometh**; and instead of the fathers the children arise to be *accounted to the Lord for a generation†*. Though
numbers

* Eccles. i. 4.

† Psalm xxii. 30.

numbers are continually passing through the gates of death; though the lights and ornaments of the church and world are removed; and every Christian society is occasionally bereaved of those who have contributed to its lustre and support; the wisdom and grace of the Redeemer have ordained a succession of such as shall rise up and call him blessed. Death, indeed, on the one hand, and religious indifference on the other, lay waste some of the richest plantations in the garden of our God. If we judge of the number of real Christians by that of outward professors, have we not reason to lament their very visible decrease? How many vacant seats will every place of worship exhibit, once stately and honourably occupied by the ancestors of those, who have forsaken the house and worship of God! Death makes breaches upon us, which are not soon nor easily repaired; and that disregard to public ordinances, which is the disgrace of the present day, renders the depredations of death a subject of just and bitter lamentation. The triumphs of death, more sensibly felt, and more distinctly observed, by reason of the languor and indifference of modern christians, present a very gloomy and discouraging prospect: and some may be ready to exclaim, with a mixture of regret and despondency, shall the gates of the invisible world eventually prevail against the Church of the Redeemer? Will the ravages of death and the declining state of

religion end in its total extinction and ruin? Shall we, or any of our posterity, survive the existence of the Christian Church? and shall any future generations in this distinguished land be ever reduced to the wretched state of those countries, where the Church of God was first planted?

Whilst, I am persuaded, it will be our united prayer and endeavour to prevent a calamity so dreadful, we may be assured, that whatever may be the state of one or another nation, in this respect, the Church of Christ will continue to the end of time. *The gates of death shall not prevail against it.* It will be subject to vicissitudes and declensions; but it will never be utterly lost and fail. We may rely on the truth and faithfulness of its great Lord and guardian. He hath promised to preserve and uphold it; and his power and grace are equal to his purpose. We have reason to believe, that it will yet revive and flourish; that the unbelieving Jew, and unenlightened Gentile of every nation, will be admitted into its sacred inclosures; and that the name of the Redeemer shall be known and magnified through the whole habitable world.

IV. The declaration of the text implies, that the dominion of death over those members of the Christian Church, who are or may be removed into its invisible territories, is utterly

terly abolished; and that they shall share the triumphs and glories of their risen and exalted Redeemer*.

By the Church of Christ we may understand the whole assembly of those who are his true disciples, however they may be distinguished by climate, religious opinion, mode of profession or outward condition. With respect to such it is unquestionably true, that *the gates of the unseen world shall not prevail against them*. Our Lord Jesus has, by his own death and subsequent resurrection, *destroyed him that had the power of death* †. *He hath the keys of the unseen state and of death* ‡. He will open the doors of their prison and relieve the captives. Life and immortality are the subjects of his doctrine and the fruits of his mediation. *All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life* §. *He will come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe* ||. To human view and apprehension death is the end of our being and enjoyment. The eye of sense cannot pursue the departed spirit into the mansions of the dead. But faith supplies us with organs of perception, that can penetrate through the veil, and unfolds to our mental eye the glorious scenes and prospects of immortality. This informs us, that
death,

* Grotius in loc.

† Heb. ii. 14.

‡ Rev. i. 18.

§ John v. 28, 29.

|| 2 Thess. i. 10.

death, under the dispensation of the Redeemer, infers no interruption of our existence. It only produces a change in the manner and connections of our being, and in the nature of our exercises and enjoyments. This informs us, that the period approaches, in which the dead shall be raised; and teaches us to *look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself* *. Faith directs our views and prospects to a season of retribution, when *death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed* †; and the saints of God shall be convened to the tribunal of their Judge, and receive the blissful sentence from his lips, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* ‡. THEN shall we perceive, admire, and applaud the literal and full accomplishment of the promise in the text, that the *gates of hades, or of the invisible state, shall not prevail against the Church of Christ*.

From what has been said we may deduce the following reflections :

- I. The continuance of the Christian Church through successive generations is a strong proof

* Philip. iii. 20, 21. † 1 Cor. xv. 26. ‡ Matt. xxv. 34.

proof of the truth and excellence of those principles upon which it is founded.

Had the little flock, which was collected together during our Lord's public ministry, been united only by the weak bonds of enthusiasm or imposture; the disgrace and death of the chief Shepherd must have separated and dispersed it. Can we imagine, from any known principles of human policy and contrivance, that its number would have been so prodigiously augmented in the place, and immediately at the time of his crucifixion? But let its first increase, however contrary to every ordinary event, be attributed to the operation of human passion; to what can we ascribe its subsistence and spread through the most civilized nations, where passion could have no influence, and where every shadow of an imposture must have been examined and detected? What could have procured for it friends and votaries during the three first centuries, when it was calumniated and persecuted, and when any alliance with it must have been maintained at the risk, and even with the sacrifice, of ease, property and life? What could have preserved the name and society of Christians to our own days, through all the revolutions of time and of the world? To what are we to ascribe the subsistence and perpetuity of the Christian Church?—of that community, which was first formed in Judea under
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the direction and auspices of one, who, to outward appearance, was mean and inconsiderable, and who died an ignominious death; and which has struggled with such a variety of opposition thro' every age? The Church of Christ was founded upon a rock. The principles of its union were supernatural and divine. The doctrines and fancies, by which its subsistence has been maintained, were derived from God. His providence has been its security and defence. Because it has been the peculiar charge of the Almighty, it continues to this day, and will continue to the end of time.

II. An interest in the privileges and benefits of the Christian Church is of unspeakable importance to frail and mortal man.

This is our only certain refuge amidst the changes of life and time. Hither let us repair for safety, consolation and hope, under all our trials. If we are real and living members of that Church, which is *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone* *, we shall be secure from every storm of temptation and of distress; we shall be under the protection of Almighty power, and under the smiles of paternal favour: we shall enjoy the privileges and hopes of the children of God, and
grow

* Ephes. ii. 20.

grow up into a meetness *for the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven* *. Why should any exclude themselves from this sacred inclosure—from this blest asylum? Why should they wander into forbidden and destructive paths, in the vain pursuit of ease and pleasure; when they may find in the society of true Christians, under the patronage of the Redeemer of the world, a refuge from guilt, and doubt and fear, and an ample provision of grace and consolation, which can never fail?

III. The promise of the text is very encouraging amidst the visible declensions of religion, and in the prospect of futurity.

The society of true Christians may be diminished; but it can never be annihilated. It may lose its friends and advocates by death; and indifference may prevent the loss from being immediately supplied. The greatest and best men must withdraw their support and depart into the regions of rest and silence. But the Church of Christ, who is in this respect the *same yesterday, to-day, and for ever* †, shall abide, and renew its triumphs. How animating to its friends on the survey of its decrease, and in the concern they feel for its subsistence and prosperity at the close of life, is the promise of our Saviour in the text!

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They

* Heb. xii. 23.

† Heb. xiii. 8.

They leave it at the call of God ; but they leave it under a divine and almighty protection. They regret the inefficacy of all their attempts to revive its prosperity and honour ; but what they are too feeble to accomplish, the grace of God will in due time effect. They commit it, with all its interests, to its great head and Lord ; and from a feeling of the benefits they derive from it, the last accents they utter are a broken petition, pronounced with a faltering tongue, for its security and welfare. *May the gates of the grave never prevail against thy Church.*

IV. What consolation and support to the upright and good does this subject furnish in the near views of death and eternity !

The power of death is restrained and vanquished. The gates of the grave are opened ; and they present an entrance into immortality and glory. Why should any such tremble and draw back in the view of their last conflict ? Shall we be reluctant to pass through the gates of death into unchangeable life and blessedness ? Shall we be afraid to die, when death is the certain commencement of an everlasting state of security and happiness ? The slavish fear of dissolution is unreasonable and ungrateful. If we are the members of that body, of which Christ is the head and guardian, he will conduct and uphold us
through

through the dark valley; and give us an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom. Let our faith and hope be in more lively exercise, and we shall be able to welcome the approaches of our dissolution; and when the pains of death increase upon us, adopt this triumphant language: *Come Lord Jesus: Amen. Come quickly †.*

V. Parents may derive encouragement from this subject to pay peculiar attention to the religious education of their children: and the young will imbibe a spirit of emulation to distinguish themselves as the ornament and support of the Christian Church.

You, Sirs! that are parents, are in some measure intrusted with the *perpetuity* of the Christian Church. To your fidelity and care is committed the accomplishment of the gracious prediction, that the *gates of death shall not prevail against it*. It is an honourable and important charge. It will be your concern to execute it with fidelity and diligence; and God will give you success. It will afford some of the most pleasing reflections in your declining years, that your posterity are likely to be fellow-workers with Christ, in perpetuating the being and honour of his Church in the world. When you are summoned to quit your stations of usefulness, it will be a reviving thought,

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that

that your children will succeed you, and be the guardians and ornaments of religion, when you have entered on your rest and reward. And if parents, in the unseen state, can have any apprehension of what passes in this lower world, the reflection on the piety and usefulness of their children will be no inconsiderable augmentation of their bliss. This, however, is certain, that it will greatly redound to the joy and triumph of their season of retribution to be able to say: *Behold, here are we, and the children which God hath given us !* †

And is it no incitement to your emulation, ye ingenuous descendants of pious parents ! to consider, that your heavenly Father directs his views to you for the support of his church and interest in the world ? Will he honour you, as the instruments of fulfilling and executing his gracious designs ? and do you feel no grateful and generous ambition to discharge the trust, which he confides in you ? Can you look with indifference on the breaches which are made by death in the Christian Societies to which you belong ? And have you no concern to fill up those vacant parts of duty, which God and nature have devolved upon you ? You cannot bear to think, that death and the grave should prevail against the Church of Christ. You are animated by his promise to
every

† Heb. ii. 13.

every good word and work ; and will approve yourselves *stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord †.*

VI. How important and useful is the Christian Ministry : and what reason have we to admire the goodness of divine Providence, which raises up a succession of those, who are instruments of perpetuating the Church of the Redeemer in the world !

How encouraging likewise to the faithful Minister, under a humbling sense of his insufficiency for the arduous work assigned him, and under the mortifying apprehension, lest he *should labour in vain, and spend his strength for nought ‡*—how encouraging, in such circumstances, is the assurance, that the Christian Church shall subsist and prevail, till time shall be no more !

Finally. May not ministers, who are faithful and diligent in the discharge of the trust reposed with them, expect to be supported and encouraged in the exercise of their ministry, not merely for their own sakes, but with a view of preserving and perpetuating the being of the Christian Church ?

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† 1 Cor. xv. 58.

‡ Isaiah xlix. 4.

It is your province, Sirs! whom God has blessed with the means and the inclination for this purpose, to be fellow-workers with Christ in accomplishing the promise of the text. And I am persuaded this consideration will engage you, not only to contribute to their support, but to encourage them in their labours by a diligent attendance on their ministrations, and a concern to profit by them. To ministers, who are duly solicitous for fulfilling the end of their office, nothing can be more pleasing and more animating than the regular attendance and visible improvement of those, who are committed to their care. May the Minister of this Christian Society be thus encouraged! and may the encouragement he meets with induce him to persevere in his fidelity and diligence, and increase his concern and ardour in promoting your present and eternal welfare! In the prospect of the period of judgment and retribution, may he be able to say of the people of his charge, *What is my hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? Ye are my glory and my joy**! Amen.

* 1 Thessal. ii. 19, 20.



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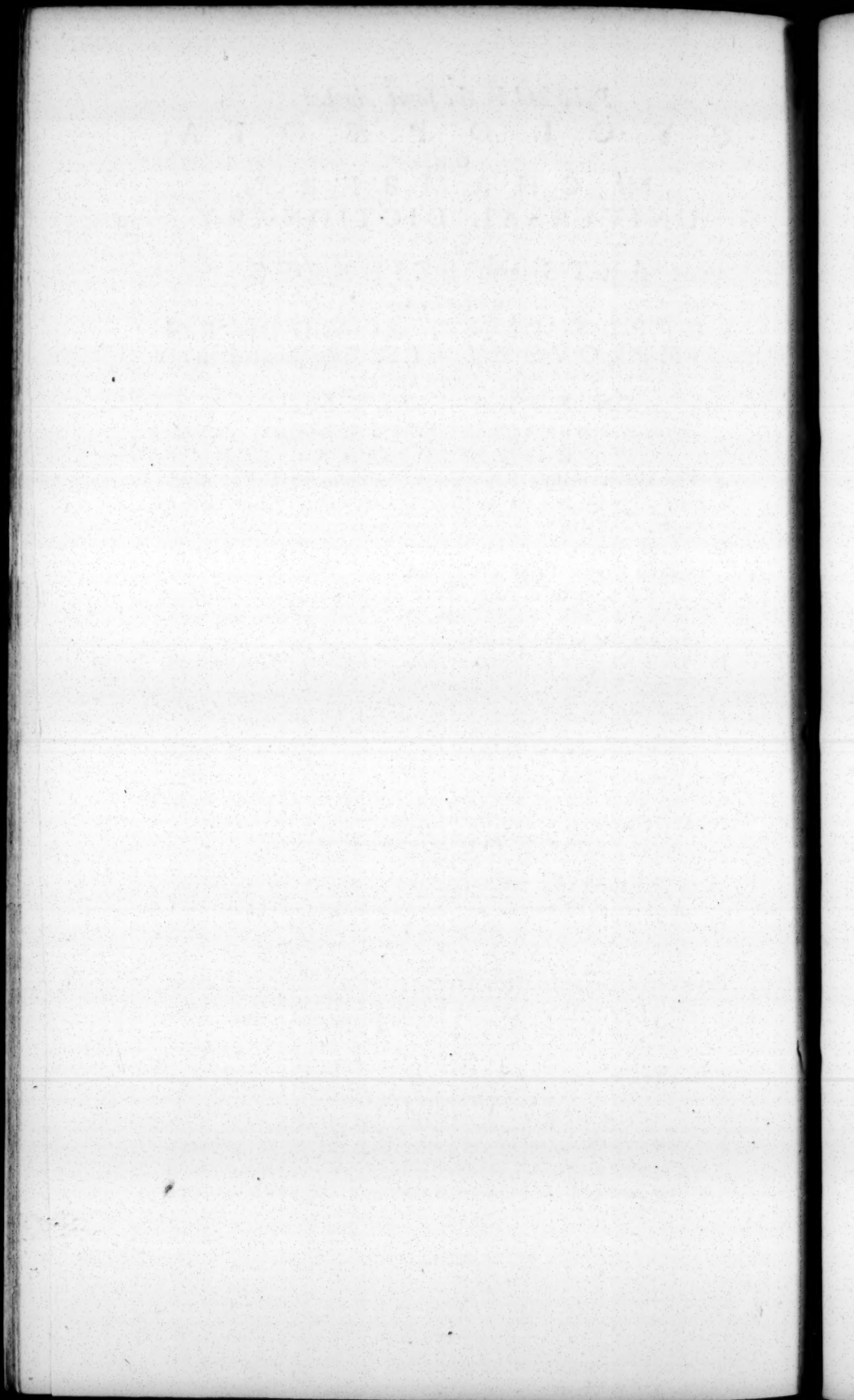
Preached at Salter's-Hall, Nov. 5, 1779. To the Society,
that support the Lord's-Day Evening Lecture at that Place;
—and published at the Request of the Society.

A L S O

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S E R M O N,

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INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE

REV. THOMAS HOWE,

AT BRIDPORT, IN DORSETSHIRE,

ON THE 10th OF JULY, 1788.

AND THE QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO HIM

BY ABRAHAM REES, D. D. F. R. S.

AND THE ANSWERS OF MR. HOWE.



INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR qualifications for the Christian Ministry have been long known and approved. To the abilities which you have derived from the Author of Nature, and the knowledge which you have acquired by a course of regular education, you have superadded the application, improvement and experience of maturer years; and you are thoroughly furnished for every good word and work.

Your brethren and friends, who are assembled on the present occasion, need no evidence of your fitness for the office which you have undertaken: Nor does the congregation, to which you minister with distinguished approbation, and with the pleasing prospect of increasing usefulness, require any satisfaction in this respect. We claim no right to invest you either with the office of a christian minister in general, or with that of the pastor of this Christian Society in particular. The former

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depends

depends on your own deliberate choice, and the qualifications which you possess for the acceptable exercise of it: and the latter on the united suffrage and continued attachment of the members and subscribers of this Christian Society. Your brethren in the ministry are now convened, at your request, in concurrence with the wishes of this congregation, to acknowledge and approve you in the full exercise of that ministry, for which you are prepared, and to which you are devoted. Without pretending to invest you with any rights or powers, of which you are not already in compleat possession, and disclaiming every kind and degree of dominion over your faith as a Christian, and your profession as a Minister, they think it decent and useful to avail themselves of the opportunity, which your settlement with this society affords them, of bearing public testimony to your qualifications and character; of suggesting to you and to those to whom you minister, by a charge and a sermon, important and salutary instruction; of impressing on *your* mind, and on *their* minds a sense of truths and duties, which cannot be too often recollected, nor too seriously considered; and of recommending *you* and *them*, by united prayer, to the divine favour and blessing.

Against

Against a religious service of this kind, on an occasion so interesting, your brethren now engaged can discern no sufficient objection. They do not think themselves justified in discontinuing a practice, reasonable in itself and beneficial in its effects, because it has sometimes been injudiciously conducted, and because some persons have conceived erroneous and superstitious notions concerning it. To abolish an ancient and useful custom, on account of the possible abuse of it, would be, in their opinion, unwarrantable: more especially if they are able to discover traces of a similar practice in the early ages of the Christian Church, and on occasions, when no office was conferred, and when no extraordinary gifts were communicated. See Acts xiii. 1, 2, 3. Acts xv. 40.

You, my dear friend and brother, agree with us in your general ideas of the obligation and utility of this practice. We are assembled at your desire; and we know that you have no objections against making that public profession of your Christian Faith, which has been usual on such occasions. But we must request you, Sir, to consider, and *all* who attend likewise to consider, that it is your own voluntary act: And that we do not regard it as a necessary and indispensable part of the service in which we are engaged.

engaged. We wish it likewise to be known, that whatever may be your religious sentiments, and how much soever they may differ from those of your brethren, they cordially concur in recommending you, and your ministerial labours, to the blessing of God, and to the edification and acceptance of this Christian Church.

Q U E S-

QUESTIONS, &c.

QUESTION I. Will you then favour us with your sentiments concerning the nature, design and evidence of that divine and excellent Religion, which you receive as the rule of your faith and practice, and which it will be the labour of your life to recommend to others?

ANSWER. I cannot express the sensations I feel, in speaking before this numerous and respectable assembly, on the present occasion. As to particular Confessions of Faith, respecting those abstruse and disputable points of Theology (in my opinion of no essential importance) which have so lamentably divided the Christian Church, I own that to me they appear neither *necessary* nor *useful*.

On the contrary, I think, they have a tendency in some degree to influence the mind in its future researches, and to give it an *undue bias* in its farther examination into the subjects of controversy. I gratefully acknowledge the candour and liberality

lity of the Christian Society to which I statedly officiate, and of the gentlemen engaged in this service, in leaving this matter entirely to my own choice.

So far, therefore, from having an objection to it, I rejoice in the opportunity of thus publicly bearing my testimony to the truth, and giving an account of my views of the *principal* Doctrines of natural and revealed Religion; particularly of the design and evidence of that Gospel which we all profess to believe, and on which we build our hopes of future salvation. It is needless, I presume, to intreat the candour and indulgence of this auditory, while I speak on an occasion, in which my feelings are so peculiarly interested.

When I take a view of the works of Nature, the heavens above adorned with innumerable stars, which probably afford light and heat to myriads of worlds; the sun placed in the center of our system, and by its salutary rays, reviving and cheering those planets that revolve around it—When I consider the regularity of the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and the proper distances at which they are situated—When I cast my eyes around me on this earth, so well furnished for the subsistence and comfort of its inhabitants—When I reflect on the constant return of the seasons, Summer, Winter, Seed-time and
Harvest,

Harvest, and the regular succession of days and nights—When I employ my thoughts on the formation of the Lord of this lower creation *Man*, on the *structure* of his *body*, and the *powers* of his *mind*, on that rational nature with which he is endowed, capable of endless improvement in knowledge, virtue and happiness—When engaged in serious contemplation on these subjects, I am struck with a solemn awe, and convinced that a supreme intelligent Being necessarily exists, whom we call God.

It can be proved, I think, from undeniable principles of reason, that as God is the first great cause and original of all things, so He himself must be underived in his existence; present in all parts of his vast dominion; continually exercising an over-ruling providence, which extends to the meanest reptile, and the most trivial event; ordering every dispensation, which infinite Wisdom and Benevolence can devise, for the good of his creatures; “whose loving kindness and tender mercies are over all the works of his hands;” the unerring Searcher of hearts, and impartial Judge of all mankind.

From the Mosaic account of the formation of this earth, in the most ancient and authentic history with which we are favoured, it appears, that *order* and *regularity* being produced by the Divine

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Power, out of that *Chaotic* state, in which it is first exhibited to us, and herbs and trees, insects, fishes, fowls and beasts of various kinds, being created: "God formed man out of the dust of the ground, breathed into him the breath of life," and endowed him with those powers and faculties, by which he is distinguished from the brutes that perish. The benevolent Author of his nature having made him capable of continued virtue and happiness, placed him in paradise, bestowed on him peculiar marks of his favour and friendship, and enjoined but *one test* of his *obedience*, that he should abstain from eating the fruit of a certain tree in the garden, threatening death as the penalty of his transgression.

By the Mosaic history we are informed likewise, that man, being overcome by the solicitations of the woman God had given him, who was herself seduced by a creature called the Serpent, violated the Divine command; by which melancholy event, natural and moral evil was introduced, sin entered into the world, and our first parents with their posterity became *mortal*; liable to the troubles and miseries of human life, and in the end the prey of *death*.

Whether this account be taken *literally* or *allegorically*—a question on which learned men differ—This information seems to me at least to be conveyed

conveyed by it, that our first parents were placed in a state of trial ; that they broke the law of God, and lost their innocence and virtue ; whereby the seeds of disease and death were sown, extending their baneful effects to themselves and their descendants.

But it appears to me, that our heavenly Father, foreknowing to what a wretched state they would reduce themselves by their apostacy, had from a principle of pure love and benevolence, *preordained a Saviour*. To keep them therefore from *despair*, and to revive the hopes and expectations of their *posterity*, God, though he saw fit to banish our first parents from Paradise, gave them this gracious declaration, “ the seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent’s head.”

Some plainer intimations of this glorious event were communicated to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ; to them it was declared, that “ in their seed should all the families of the earth be blessed.” Moses, the distinguished servant of God, and lawgiver to the Israelites, speaks of “ a Prophet whom the Lord their God would raise up among their brethren like unto him.”

The succeeding prophets refer to some great Personage that would one day make his appear-

ance in the important character of the Redeemer and Saviour of the world. They intimate the *time* when the Messiah would come. They foretel the *tribe* and *family* of which he would be born; the *place* of his *nativity*, and various other circumstances respecting his birth, his life and miracles, the treatment he would meet with from his country-men, his death, resurrection, ascension, and glorious exaltation.

Sacred and profane history coincide in establishing this important fact, that in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, the Roman emperor, when a general expectation of the Messiah prevailed among the Jews; when a variety of circumstances conspired to intimate his approach, Jesus Christ was born,

When I read the sacred scriptures I perceive, that in Him were fulfilled many striking prophecies, delivered many ages before his birth, which no *human* wisdom or foresight could have dictated; that they proceeded from the inspiration of God, and were designed as a *signal testimony* to the Divine Mission of the person to whom they should apply.

The accounts given of Jesus Christ by the Evangelists, and of the *extraordinary powers* with which the Apostles and many of the first Christians

tians were endowed by the holy spirit, related in the New Testament, I receive as *well authenticated Matters of fact*. There seems to be abundant historical proof, that these accounts were really written by those persons to whom they are ascribed. They had from their situation sufficient means of information, respecting the truth of the things they relate, so that they could not be deceived themselves. From the sense of integrity and piety they discovered on every occasion; the persecutions to which their profession of Christianity exposed them, and the noble heroic spirit with which they endured these persecutions, I conclude, they would not *wilfully deceive* others.

When I consider the rapid progress of Christianity, propagated by a few poor unlearned men; opposed by all the powers of the world; having to engage with the pride of the Grecian philosophers, the prejudices of the bigotted Jew, and the persecutions of the cruel and malicious of every description, I am convinced, that if this religion had not been of God, it must have come to nought.

When I perceive the exact accomplishment of many of the prophecies of Jesus Christ, concerning the circumstances of his own death, resurrection and ascension; the descent of the Spirit on
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the day of Pentecost, the extensive spread of his religion, and the signal destruction of Jerusalem; I am constrained to acknowledge, that he was *no Deceiver*, but a *true Prophet*, intimately acquainted with the will and design of his heavenly Father.

When I reflect, moreover, on the miraculous conversion of St. Paul, from a violent and bigotted Jew to a zealous and noble defender of the Christian Faith; when I think on the nature of the prophecies delivered by some of the apostles, more especially the revelation of St. John, containing a general account of the state of the Christian Church till the end of the world; and farther reflect that part of these prophecies hath been already so exactly fulfilled, as to give us reason to expect the accomplishment of the rest in due time—seriously considering these things, I *feel* that the proofs of Christianity are so strong, numerous, and convincing, as to command my most *cordial assent*.

When I add to this, the evidence arising from the reasonableness, the purity, the grand simplicity of the writings of the New Testament; when I consider that they contain doctrines of infinite moment and importance, many of which could not have been discovered by the unassisted light of nature, yet when revealed perfectly agreeable
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to reason; when I perceive their tendency, to illuminate the understanding, to inspire the heart with sentiments of universal benevolence, to promote holiness of life, to afford consolation in distress, and raise the hopes of the dejected, to ennoble the nature of man, and advance his present and future felicity; they appear to me stamped with Divine Authority, and I cheerfully receive the gospel, as my rule of faith and practice.

The principal doctrines contained in these sacred records are, in my opinion, these:—

That there is one God, a Being possessed of every possible perfection, the Creator and Preserver of the whole universe—that he exercises a natural and moral government over the world—that when mankind, by the abuse of their faculties, the perversion of their reason, and corruption of their hearts, were reduced to a state of guilt and ruin, our benevolent Parent, not willing that any of his creatures should perish, sent his son Jesus Christ to save them—that the terms on which we may hope for the forgiveness of our offences, and acceptance with our Maker, are, “Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” and *that repentance* is vain, which does not terminate in the forsaking of sin, and that faith ineffectual which produces not good works—that *divine assistance* will be afforded to all those who
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with ardent prayers to God, exert their sincere endeavours, to correct their bad habits, and to attain practical principles of piety and virtue—that this is a state of trial and probation for another world—that “as in *Adam* all *die*, so in *Christ* shall all be *made alive*”—that when the schemes of Divine Providence are completed, “the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements melt with fervent heat, and the works that are therein be burned up;” “Jesus Christ will come in the power and glory of his Father, with his holy angels;” the dead will be raised; those who are then alive be changed, and *both* be summoned before his awful tribunal, “to be judged according to the deeds done in the body”—that then the sincerely good and faithful will be honoured and rewarded, the wicked and impenitent disgraced and punished.

These appear to me to be the most important parts, the grand and striking outlines of the Christian scheme; and I am happy thus publicly to declare my faith in those doctrines, in which most sects and denominations of Christians agree, how much soever they may differ with respect to subjects of *doubtful disputation*.

It may not be improper for me to add, that although a number of burdensome rites and ceremonies were enjoined by the Jewish lawgiver
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on the Israelites, yet Jesus Christ appointed to be observed by his followers, two positive institutions only, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; which, in my opinion, were designed to be continued throughout every age of the Christian Church. The *former* initiatory to all its outward privileges; the *latter* calculated to preserve in our minds, a sense of our obligations to God for sending his Son to die for mankind; to express our sincere faith in Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Saviour, and our love and charity to one another as his followers, and in the most significant manner, "to show forth the Lord's death till he come."

Thus have I, in the presence of God, and this respectable congregation, delivered those general principles of my faith, which appear to me the most important. I have been silent with respect to the abstruse and speculative doctrines of Theology. I think them, compared with the plain truths of Christianity, of little moment. Although the evidence seems to me to preponderate on *one side* of these controversial subjects, rather than the other, yet I perceive difficulties attend every scheme, which is so zealously maintained by different sects and parties.

Whatever opinions therefore I form, I wish to be always open to conviction, and to guard against

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that *scepticism*, on the one hand, which leaves all religious principles unsettled, and that *dogmatical spirit*, on the other, which decides, with an air of infallibility, those points of controversy, on which wise and good men differ; exercising, at the same time, unfeigned love and charity towards all denominations of Christians. I doubt not, but the *sincere* of every religious profession; all those who ardently pray to "the giver of every good and perfect gift" for heavenly wisdom, and seriously endeavour to find out the truth; all those who improve the advantages, whatever they may be, which God affords them, of knowing and practising his will, though permitted to fall into many speculative errors, will meet with the *Divine acceptance*.

QUESTION II. You, Sir, are not unapprized of the corruptions and errors that have been introduced into the Christian Church; of the degree in which they have prevailed, and of the pernicious effects which they have produced in the church of Rome. The Protestant Reformation you most cordially approve, as an event of the greatest importance to the civil and religious interests of our country. Will you please to inform us, what are your sentiments of the principles upon which this reformation was founded?

ANSWER

ANSWER. There is no blessing with which heaven has favoured the world, but is liable to be abused. This seems to have been the case with the pure and benevolent religion of Jesus Christ. It was soon corrupted by pride, ambition and worldly policy. The Church of Rome usurped a power and authority, inconsistent with the true spirit of Christianity, and inimical to the dearest rights and liberties of mankind.

When I consider how irrational and contradictory are its principles; how pompous, childish, and absurd its rites and ceremonies; that it is founded in the grossest ignorance, and supported by the most unchristian means of cruelty and spiritual tyranny; I cannot but esteem the Reformation from popery, as one of the noblest æras in history. The reformers justified it upon the most solid and rational principles, the sufficiency of Scripture for a rule of faith and manners, and the right of private judgment in religious matters. They clearly pointed out the absurdity of supposing, there was any *other infallible head* of the *Church* than *Jesus Christ*. They laboured to expose the arrogant claims, the presumptuous pretences of the hierarchy of the church of Rome, and to give men juster notions of the rights and privileges to which they were entitled by reason and revelation. And Heaven crowned their exertions with success. Those renowned worthies

who were the instruments of bringing about this glorious event, ought to be had in everlasting remembrance, as the benefactors of the world in general, and the Christian Church in particular.

QUESTION III. You, Sir, have connected yourself with that body of Protestants in this country, who are denominated *Dissenters*. Distinguished as they are in a variety of respects, and happy as their ministers must think themselves in the voluntary expressions of their attachment and esteem; and peculiarly happy as you are in your situation and connections; yet you well know, that dissenting ministers are excluded from a share in those emoluments, which the established church appropriates to her own clergy. In the progress of your life, and as you extend your connections, you will probably form acquaintance with many members and ministers of the national church, who will deserve your cordial affection and respect; and you will, we are persuaded, on all occasions, maintain and profess your own sentiments with the liberality and candour of a gentleman, a scholar and a Christian. However, as you differ in your judgment and profession, from a very respectable body of your fellow Christians and fellow Protestants, will you favour us with some account of the *grounds* of this difference, or the *reasons why* you dissent, and

and chuse to exercise your ministry among Protestant Dissenters?

ANSWER. Convinced it is the duty of every one to adopt that mode of worship, which, after mature consideration, appears to him the purest and most rational, I have, with the impartiality due to the cause of Truth, examined into the grounds of my dissent from the established Church of this country,

I esteem and reverence many of its members, both clergy and laity, as men of distinguished learning, candour and piety. I am happy to rank some of them in the number of my valued friends, and do not the less respect them, on account of their maintaining a mode of worship different from my own. But at the same time, with sentiments of brotherly love and charity towards that body of Christians, from whose communion I dissent, I thus publicly declare, that after an unbiassed examination, the terms of conformity appear to me inconsistent with the allegiance due to Jesus Christ, the sole head and lawgiver to his Church.

I cannot perceive that any power under Heaven has a right, *authoritatively*, to decree rites and ceremonies, and to impose creeds and articles of faith on the consciences of Christians. My objections

jections likewise receive additional strength from the consideration, that the doctrines implied and enforced in the formularies, creeds and articles of the national Church, are some of them, in my apprehension, evidently inconsistent with sound Reason and Scripture; and others, of a nature so speculative and abstruse, as to furnish matter for doubts and controversies amongst the most learned, wisest, and best of men. They must, I think, naturally occasion a solemn prevarication in those who conform, without approving them, or at least, an obstruction to the cause of free enquiry, and an impartial search after truth.

I gratefully therefore avail myself of the liberty allowed by the laws of this favoured land, to maintain and preserve my dissent from the communion of the establishment; and to worship God according to the dictates of my own conscience, and in the mode, that appears to me to comport with the purity and simplicity of Christian worship.

QUESTION IV. The great design of the ministry is to promote knowledge, religion and happiness. You, Sir, we doubt not, can assign the most worthy and laudable motives and ends, in your present undertaking. Will you acquaint us with those views and motives, which have had the

the chief influence, in determining you to engage in the work of the Christian Ministry ?

ANSWER. Educated from my earliest youth for the ministry ; when I came to years of maturity, I seriously reflected on the nature and importance of the work, in which I was to be engaged. Convinced that religion is of divine original, and essential to the present comfort and future happiness of men, I consider it as my duty, to explain the evidences of it, to describe its beauty, excellence and importance, and to enforce it by those various motives, which Reason and Revelation furnish.

If I know my own heart, to be beneficial to my fellow creatures, by endeavouring to promote religious knowledge and rational piety, a spirit of christian candour and charity among professors of different denominations, and a conscientious regard to the great and fundamental truths and duties of Christianity, is the important end I have had in view, in taking on me so momentous a Charge, as that of the ministerial office. Happy shall I be, to be made instrumental in contributing, in the least degree, to the comfort and edification of the Christian Society committed to my ministerial charge ; supremely happy, at the great and final day of accounts, “ when Christ the Chief Shepherd shall appear,” to be able cheerfully

fully to stand forth with my Flock, and say, "Lord, here am I, and the people whom thou hast given me."

QUESTION V. As you advance in life and in knowledge, you will find more and more need of new accessions to the furniture you have already gained, and less wonder at the Apostle's exclamation, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Will you consider yourself under a solemn obligation of attending with diligence to reading, meditation and prayer, in order to your increasing improvement and usefulness? And, as you have opportunity, will you go on to cultivate those literary and ornamental accomplishments, which are peculiarly necessary in the present day, for supporting the dignity of your character and office? You need not be told, that no situation, however agreeable and promising, is exempt from difficulties and discouragements. May we not hope that you have seriously considered this, and are prepared, in humble dependance on Divine Succour, to acquit yourself with integrity in the service of your great Lord and Judge, that you may be approved by Him at his appearing, and as a good and faithful servant enter into your Master's joy?

ANSWER. When I seriously consider the vast importance of the ministerial charge, the various duties

duties incumbent on those of my profession, and the awful account I must render of my ministry to the Judge of hearts, I tremble, lest I should, in any respect, prove unfaithful in our great Master's cause. I see the necessity of close application to various branches of learning; of retired and serious meditation; of frequent and earnest addresses to the Throne of Grace, and an unwearied attention to the public and private duties of my office, to appear with credit as a Christian Minister, and adorn the holy religion I profess.

In the present enlightened, though dissipated age, when infidelity is recommended by all the embellishing arts of refinement; when a *sense* of piety is termed *enthusiasm*, and an attention to the Sabbath and public ordinances *superstition*; when Christianity is so much injured, by the gloomy notions, or imprudent zeal of many of its friends, and so ungenerously misrepresented, by either the sly insinuations or open attacks of its enemies; in these circumstances, I perceive the *peculiar necessity* of science and literature in a public teacher of religion, to expose the sophistry of its opponents, to exhibit it in its native purity and simplicity, and to establish the truth of it upon the unshaken principles of sound reason and solid argument.

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I do indeed expect difficulties and discouragements in my ministerial work ; but, acting with a view to the presence of God, and the approbation of conscience and my final Judge, I look up to heaven for divine direction and support under them. It is my highest ambition, at the close of life, to be able to adopt the animating language of the Apostle Paul, " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me, at the day" of general retribution.

QUESTION VI. Your profession as a Christian Minister, and a Minister among Protestant Dissenters, will afford you many occasions for the exercise of that catholic and candid temper, which christianity recommends. Will you, Sir, whenever an opportunity offers, discourage every kind and degree of bigotry and uncharitableness, and endeavour to maintain the truth in love, and to promote peace and mutual forbearance among Christians ?

ANSWER. I am convinced, that amidst a diversity of opinions, unavoidable in the present state, and permitted to subsist by the Governor of the world, for wise and important purposes, it is the duty and privilege of all persons, to judge and
act

act according to the dictates of *their own minds*. To me therefore it appears an unwarrantable usurpation of the prerogative of Heaven, for *one* sect and denomination of christians to *condemn another*, for difference in religious sentiments. Christian love or charity is a bond of union, which in my opinion ought to connect religious professors of every description.

Persuaded that this is the principal virtue of Christianity, of the best tendency to the peace and welfare of society, and the most ornamental to a disciple of Jesus Christ, I think it my duty, frequently to recommend this virtue from the pulpit, and to take every opportunity of promoting a spirit of candour and charity, among those with whom I converse. I esteem it a benevolent dispensation of Providence, that has appointed my situation in a *Protestant* country, and in an *age*, when the rights of conscience are so well ascertained, and the absurdity of bigotry and uncharitableness so generally acknowledged.

I look up to Heaven likewise with sentiments of gratitude, for fixing my lot in my ministerial capacity, with a Society, whose peculiarly affectionate treatment of my late worthy Predecessor, in his long and severe affliction, and the kind and generous marks of regard I have already received, encourage me to hope for the exercise of their

candid and catholic spirit towards myself, and that mutual good-will and friendship, which ought always to subsist between a minister and his people. May the period soon arrive, when all Christians will exemplify the characteristic of their religion, "by loving one another, and keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

QUESTION VII. You know the great importance of an irreproachable character to persons of the profession which you have assumed, with respect both to their honour and their usefulness. May we not hope—nay, we are warranted to assure ourselves, that you will engage, by divine help, to adorn the doctrine you preach, by a good life, and by an exemplary conduct in every relation?

ANSWER. No truth can impress my mind with stronger conviction than this, that the profession of religion, without a conformable practice, is not merely vain and insignificant, but criminal and pernicious in a high degree. I am sensible likewise, that a *peculiar* degree of decorum and propriety of conduct is required in a Christian Minister, to preserve the dignity of his office, and to recommend the duties which he enforces on others.

Convinced,

Convinced, however, of my own natural failings and infirmities, I request my friends to make those favourable allowances for me which Christian candour requires. I shall, at the same time, esteem myself under additional obligations to them, for plainly and affectionately acquainting me with whatever they may perceive amiss in my temper or behaviour, and joining with me in imploring divine grace, to enable me to fulfil my resolutions of living an exemplary life, and walking worthy the holy profession I bear. I wish always to act both in public and private, with a view to that solemn period, when the *secrets* of all hearts will be *disclosed*; when the *sincerity* or *hypocrisy* of our intentions and designs will be made manifest before the assembled world of men and angels, and every one treated according to the motives by which he was actuated, and the good or bad deeds done in the present state.

For this purpose, let me call upon you, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, and you the People of my Charge, and all you who are present as witnesses to this solemn service, to pray to God in my behalf, that I may make continual improvement in the knowledge of the sacred oracles; experience all necessary assistance in the discharge of the duties of my ministerial and pastoral office; and have virtue and fortitude, amidst every temptation

temptation or opposition, to preserve my integrity, and maintain the credit of that noble cause in which I am engaged. Join your prayers with mine, that I may be faithful to God and Christ, to my own conscience and the souls of men, and enjoy the pleasing satisfaction of "seeing the work of the Lord daily prospering in my hands;" that when earthly ordinances shall cease, and the ties of friendship and affection, which unite minister and people together here below, shall be dissolved by death, we may together meet around the throne of God; renew our friendly intercourse; and with one heart engage in the grand and exalted services and employments of the heavenly state, without weariness, without interruption and without end.



You,

You, my Dear Sir, have now made a good confession before many witnesses. The sentiments you have delivered, and the resolutions you have expressed, correspond to the expectations, which those who know you best had formed concerning you. They are worthy of the station you occupy, and give you reason to expect, that your labours will be accepable, and that the blessing of God will crown them with success. To his blessing we shall now proceed devoutly to recommend *you* and the *people* of your charge: not doubting their cordial concurrence with us on the present occasion.

A C H A R G E

1841
The first of the year was a very
cold one, and the weather was
very disagreeable. The snow
was very deep, and the wind
was very strong. The people
were very much distressed,
and the cattle were very
suffering. The people were
very much distressed, and the
cattle were very suffering.

A C H A R G E,
DELIVERED AT BRIDPORT, DORSETSHIRE,
ON THE TENTH OF JULY, 1788,

AT THE ORDINATION OF THE
REV. THOMAS HOWE;

A N D,

ON THE SIXTEENTH OF THE SAME MONTH,
A T R I N G W O O D, H A N T S,

AT THE ORDINATION OF THE
REV. WILLIAM GELLIBRAND,
BY ANDREW KIPPIS, D.D. F.R.S. AND S.A.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

CHAS. R. C. B.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C.

RECEIVED
JUL 10 1890
AT THE
LAND OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.



A C H A R G E.

THE delivery of the Charge being the part assigned me in this day's solemn service, I doubt not but that I shall be heard with candour, by the Ministers and Christians now present; and with attention by *you*, my worthy young Brother, in the hints which I shall now lay before you. In offering these hints, I shall urge, with a becoming freedom, the considerations which to myself appear useful and important. If, in so doing, any sentiments should be advanced which may not entirely be approved of by some who hear me, they will remember, and allow for the diversity of opinions and views which will ever take place in this imperfect state. As to *you*, my dear friend, you know that I shall not wish you to pay any other regard to my advices, than what shall be found, upon the most mature deliberation, to be perfectly agreeable to your own judgment and conscience. These advices will be grounded upon the fifteenth verse of the third chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy: "That
"Thou mayest know how thou oughtest to be-
"have thyself in the House of God, which is the
"Church of the living God."

A variety of observations might be made on the Epistle to Timothy, and especially on the admirable instructions and admonitions they contain, with respect to those who engage in the work of the Ministry. The chapter from which the words I have now read to you are taken, is particularly excellent in this view, and might furnish scope for much reflection. There is something, likewise, in the connection of the text with what immediately follows, which has given occasion to the speculations and criticisms of learned men. But it would be improper, at present, to enlarge on these matters. Independently of the context, the passage I have chosen, which in itself is plain and apposite to our purpose, will open a wider field of meditation than can conveniently be ranged through in a small compass of time. "These things," saith the Apostle, "I write unto thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God."

To know how to behave ourselves in the station wherein Providence hath placed us, whatever that station may be, is certainly an affair of great moment; and it must be peculiarly momentous in the office of the Christian Ministry. Nor is it possible that a person can conduct himself well in so serious and arduous an undertaking, without many previous qualifications. One of these undoubtedly is, a competent stock of knowledge:
neither

neither is it a small degree of knowledge that is requisite in Him who wishes to be a preacher of the everlasting Gospel. His acquirements and improvements should be of various kinds; and he ought particularly to have applied himself to those parts of study which have an immediate and intimate connection with the right discharge of the pastoral duty. But, besides the possession of knowledge, it is of unspeakable importance to be endued with pious and holy dispositions. Without such dispositions, a person must be totally unfit to stand up and speak in the House of God: nor can he know how he ought to behave himself in the church of the living God. Indeed, it requires no words to prove, that a very serious spirit is absolutely necessary to a due preparation for so sacred, so awful an employment. To this must be added, a solemn determination to engage in the Work of the Ministry, accompanied with a strong and lively sense of the duties and obligations arising from that engagement. Another point which deserves to be closely considered is, who the people are among whom we choose to devote ourselves to the service of the Gospel. If it be among the Protestant Dissenters, as hath been your case, my young friend, an impartial estimation should be made of the difficulties and discouragements attending that choice, and a firm resolution be formed, in a dependance on divine aid, to sustain them with resignation, with patience,

tience, with fortitude, for the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the testimony of a good conscience.

With these previous qualifications, a person may humbly, yet chearfully assume the character of a Christian Minister. But, when he has assumed that character, how extensive, how important, is the business that lies before him! It behoves him again and again to reflect, how he ought to behave himself in the House of God, the Church of the living God.

One principal matter to be attended to for this purpose, is the habitual and diligent prosecution of still farther measures of knowledge. Whatever improvements we may have made in our preparatory studies, these will by no means be sufficient for our future use. If we imagine that we already know enough, we afford a decisive evidence that, in fact, we know but little. I have had occasion to see, and to lament, among several of my early acquaintance, the very unhappy effects that have arisen from their trusting too much to the stock of wisdom, science, and learning, which they had gained in the course of an academical education. Hence some, who promised well in the opening of life, have sadly disappointed the public expectation, and failed of reputation and usefulness. It has often been repeated,

peated, and cannot too often be repeated, that it is only the foundation of knowledge which can be laid at the seminaries of literature. We must build upon the basis which has there been fixed, and it will require years of attention, activity, and labour, to raise the superstructure to its full proportion, height, and beauty. Even Timothy, with all his extraordinary advantages ; even Timothy, though immediately instructed by the great Apostle St. Paul, though endued with supernatural gifts, though in a certain degree inspired, was exhorted to give attendance to reading. How much more then, is an unremitting and vigorous application incumbent upon *us*, who enjoy no such superior aids ; who are obliged, in the ordinary methods of Divine Providence, to cultivate and enlarge our understandings !

It would carry us too far to insist distinctly upon the various objects of study, which, more or less, have a just claim to your regard. Neither is it necessary separately to mention them, as they have already been recommended to you by your respective tutors. All the parts of learning that have been proposed to you, are not, however, alike deserving of your notice, nor can they admit of an equally vigorous and successful pursuit. He that aims to excel in every thing, will excel in nothing. The knowledge belonging to our profession, whatever that profession be, should be
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the chief aim of our zeal and ambition. *You*, my friend, have devoted yourself to divinity. Let Divinity, therefore, have your principal time, attention, and labour. It is an object of unspeakable importance, and very extensive. A thorough acquaintance with it, and with the different branches of literature to which it stands immediately related, demands years of diligent application. The history, evidence, and contents of revelation, the writings which tend to illustrate or defend it, Jewish antiquities, the annals of the church, in short, whatever is calculated to help our critical examination of the sacred Scriptures, and to promote our critical skill in them, afford abundant matter of speculation and employment. If a Minister of the Gospel be ignorant of these things, it is impossible that he should rightly discharge the duty he hath undertaken. What, in the eye of reason and religion, can be more disgraceful than for a professed Divine not to have studied the subjects, which, as a Divine, he is obliged, in conscience, to study?

But though Divinity claims your first and most assiduous care, there are other parts of science which need not, and which ought not to be neglected. Moral philosophy is so extremely important in itself, and so nearly and necessarily allied to sound and rational theology, that there is no occasion for me to say how much it will
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merit your regard, as it exists in the writings of many respectable ancients and moderns. The going on to build upon the foundation you may have laid in natural philosophy, cannot avoid being followed by many advantages. Besides the pleasure and benefit springing from the several divisions of it separately considered, hence will your understanding be matured and invigorated; hence will you effectually be secured against low and false conceptions of the appearances of nature; hence will your ideas of the divine works and ways be enlarged; and hence will your admiration, your reverence of, and your devotion to, the Supreme Being, be raised to a higher pitch of favour and extacy.

It is greatly desirable, likewise, that the acquaintance we have formed, at an academy or university, with the learned languages, and with philology in general, should be diligently cultivated and increased. This, indeed, is a matter of essential importance to a divine as such; since he cannot otherwise be a real and judicious critic in the holy Scriptures. In this view a considerable skill in the Hebrew and Greek tongues, and a knowledge of the customs, as well as of the language of the ancients, come under the direct head of Divinity. But I am here considering the subject in a subordinate light. I am here only speaking of the advantage of classical and polite learning, as it

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may

may serve to improve the mind, to refine the taste, and to give strength, proportion, elegance and spirit to our compositions.

I must beg leave to add one reason more, for preserving our mathematical, philosophical, and grammatical knowledge; which is, that it will enable us to undertake the business of education, if Providence should render such an employment necessary or desirable. It is much to be wished, that, where a very small provision is made for Dissenting Ministers, they would engage, as generally as possible, in the keeping of Schools. Many advantages would arise from this practice. Our Brethren would be more comfortably supported themselves, and make a better provision for their families. They would, at the same time, become more respectable and useful members of society; as they would contribute to promote sound knowledge, good principles, and the practice of virtue in the rising age. Our worthy ancestors, the Puritans, were eminently serviceable in this respect. For, being persecuted in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and the succeeding princes, many of them were received into private houses under the capacity of tutors, and were greatly instrumental in sowing the seeds of piety and liberty among persons of considerable rank. The present race of Dissenting Ministers will have few opportunities of being useful in the
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same way. But, by assuming, where it may be needful or proper, the honourable character (for such it really is) of Schoolmasters, they may be the happy means of contributing, perhaps in no small degree, to stop the torrent of vice, and to advance the future welfare of their country.

To return to the subject of knowledge in general, let me advise you, my Friend, to cherish an ardent and vigorous pursuit of it. I love to see a spirit of literary curiosity in a young man. I love to hear him earnestly enquiring after books and things, as such a disposition promises much improvement. I would not have him, however, extend his eagerness to every trifle that appears in the republic of letters, and that may only be fit to engage the talk of the idlers of the day. Literary curiosity should be so restrained and directed, that we may not become the dupes of literary fashion; the effects of which, as it hath displayed itself, of late years, both at home and abroad, with regard to writings of a lighter species, might furnish, in a suitable place, an amusing history. It were well if literary fashion had been limited to the more entertaining kinds of composition. But it hath extended its baneful influence into the regions of philosophy and religion. The real additions that are made to philosophical and theological knowledge should be thankfully received, and diligently prosecuted. But then, let us be satisfied that the additions are

real. Let not the rational and sober disquisitions of the eminent men who have gone before us, be rejected, till the disquisitions of their successors have been found to be more rational and more sober. They who know me, will not suspect that I have made these observations from an attachment to system.

But is the understanding alone to be cultivated? No; it is of unspeakably greater moment that the affections be rightly formed and regulated. We have already mentioned the importance of possessing pious and holy dispositions, previously to an entrance upon the Christian ministry; and we need not say that they are equally important after we have engaged in that sacred employment. We need not say, that otherwise we cannot possibly know how to behave in the House of God, the Church of the living God. Unless we have a deep and serious sense of divine things upon our souls, our work will be a drudgery to ourselves, and of little profit to others. "Ye are witnesses, and God also," says the Apostle St. Paul, "how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe;" and it should be the aim of every Minister of the Gospel to be able to make the same appeal to his hearers. For this purpose we should cherish the principles of inward, vital, practical piety and goodness, by every method.

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These principles should be cherished by constant reading of the Scriptures, and the best devotional writers ; by close and frequent meditation upon divine things ; by a course of humble and fervent prayer, and by habitual reflection upon the prodigious importance of the profession we have engaged in, and the numerous and awful duties which it demands at our hands.

Let us pass on, from specifying these qualifications of the head and the heart, to the exercise and display of them, in discharging the several functions of the ministerial office. And here, in the first place, nothing can more strongly require our attention, than to know how to behave ourselves when we appear in the pulpit ; when we stand up in the House of God, and speak to the Church of the living God. The right method of conducting the devotional part of our religious services is undoubtedly a matter that calls for all our care, and zeal, and diligence. Much might be said on the subject of public prayer. But without entering into any general questions, or giving any general directions, I shall content myself with pointing out one or two errors that have occasionally struck me, in the course of my observation and experience. The first is, that of introducing oratory into our devotions. There is scarcely any thing that can be more contrary to the nature of prayer, which is a humble, serious,

ous, solemn address to the greatest and best of Beings, and which ought to be couched in a fervent simplicity of language; and yet I have heard it carried on as if it were thought that God could be pleased and moved with pompous expressions. I have, with indignation and grief, heard it carried on in such a manner as even to destroy the very character of prayer, and to reduce it to a piece of empty declamation. This great fault may, in certain cases, have arisen from a laudable principle, the desire of introducing a variety into our devotional exercises; and the excess of which desire should, in some measure, be guarded against. A proper and becoming variety is a most important and excellent gift, and the acquisition of it is deserving of our ardent pursuit. Happy are those who are possessed of so valuable an attainment! I have known some beautiful instances of it, which have struck me with admiration and delight: and, on the other hand, I have known those, who, by aiming at an eternal diversity in their addresses to the Throne of Heaven, have seemed to forget that they were praying. For after all, there must necessarily be in prayer a certain degree of uniformity. It must consist of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition, and intercession; and though the modes of introducing these, and the language they are couched in, may be very various, and we should endeavour to render them as various as we can, yet the

the objects themselves must, and ought continually to occur, if we would, indeed, offer to our Maker the proper sacrifice of reverence, gratitude, humility, dependence, trust, and love. It is of importance in prayer, not to dwell too long upon each particular part of it; lest, by that means, the spirit of devotion in the congregation should be interrupted and wearied.

With respect to singing, though the conduct of it doth not immediately depend upon ourselves, it is desirable that we should embrace any opportunities that may arise, of using our best endeavours to have it performed with that harmony and variety, which, while they render it delightful to the worshippers, shall be the happy means of raising, to the highest degree, their pious and thankful affections to the God and Father of Mercies.

Upon the subject of Preaching, which affords a wide scope for observation, there are two or three things that I would somewhat particularly consider.

Let me exhort you, my young friend, to retain strongly in mind the right notions which, I doubt not, you already have formed concerning the nature of the eloquence of the pulpit. This is a matter which has greatly been mistaken, and, perhaps,

perhaps, never more so, than in the present age. By some it seems to be placed in pompous declamations; in an address solely to the fancy and the eye; and others may be ready to imagine that it is to be wholly engaged in aiming at the passions. But real eloquence is certainly a very different thing. Real eloquence has its basis in reason, and is employed much in reasoning. Real eloquence contains a happy union of the rational and the pathetic; and this idea of it would never have been lost, if either the dictates of good sense, or the practice of the best ancient speakers had been attentively considered. The foundation of genuine oratory must be laid in the conviction of the understanding; and to the understanding, therefore, must it, in the first place, be addressed. But, though it reasons, it doth not reason in the cold and dry manner of the logician. It reasons with prodigiously greater variety and spirit; mixing with its arguments, or rather clothing them in animated interrogations, expostulations, and changes of person; and making use, as occasion may admit, of all the figures of speech, and graces of diction. By this means, what is said will operate more powerfully both on the judgment and the affections. The affections, I say, as well as the judgment: for most certainly true eloquence, while it carries the understanding along with it, has a principal view to the affections. The neglect of the affections, which, for the last
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half century, may have arisen, in part, from an injudicious imitation of some eminent men, has been attended with unhappy consequences. The affections are the springs of the soul ; they ought to be strongly addressed ; and every motive for addressing them is afforded by the Christian religion. That minister of the Gospel who does not aim at exciting them, forgets a prime part of his duty. But then he should endeavour to excite them by proper considerations ; by the internal weight and energy of the arguments, persuasions, sanctions, and objects which he presents to his hearers. At the same time, there is a certain degree of moderation to be used in the application of the pathos ; for otherwise it will fail of its intended effect. It is the observation of the exquisitely judicious Quintilian, that nothing sooner dries up than a tear, I have heard preachers, who, by never knowing when to quit the pathetic, have caused that part of their discourse to end in weariness and disgust, which, under due management, might have been eminently affecting and useful.

Another circumstance I would a little particularly take notice of, is the method of sermons. Of late years, it has been much the fashion to have no distinct divisions ; but to deliver what is said in the desultory form of an Essay. This fashion has taken its rise, perhaps, from an improper

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imitation of the Spectator, and other celebrated compositions; and it may, likewise, have proceeded, in part, from a dislike to the too numerous and minute distinctions of our ancestors; and from an apprehension that the end of public speaking will more effectually be answered by a total concealment of method. To whatever causes the custom be owing, I cannot, for several reasons, universally, or even generally, approve of it in the pulpit. The ablest rhetoricians of antiquity have given no sanction to the mode in question. Method, according to *them*, was a capital object of consideration; and it appears, from all which they have advanced upon it, that they expected it to be visible. On such a supposition their rules are founded, and could not otherwise have been usually put into practice. For this I may appeal to the principal writers upon eloquence, from Aristotle down to Quintilian. Agreeably to the precepts of the best rhetoricians, was the practice of the best orators; and particularly of the two great luminaries, Demosthenes and Cicero; who frequently, who generally, lay down their scheme in a distinct manner. Even where they have not done this, the nature of the ancient oratory rendered their method apparent. Their discourses, according to the stated laws of composition, must consist of an exordium, a proposition of the subject, a confirmation, and a conclusion; not to mention the narration and confutation; and they did

did not think of hiding these several parts, which were known and expected.

But if cases had occurred, in which eloquence admitted or required speeches that had no visible division, or if this had been the general practice of antiquity, the same conduct would by no means be proper for sermons. An orator, in speaking upon civil or political matters, might have only a single point in view. It might be his purpose to procure an immediate vote, or to raise a sudden resolution, to be instantly carried into effect, in which case it might be right in him, by laying aside every appearance of method and art, to hurry his hearers along with him, without giving them time for cool reflection. But the Christian Preacher has no purpose of this nature. He has no design of seizing upon the passions at the expence of the understanding. His usual business is to promote a regular course of instruction and edification. Reason and the affections are to go hand in hand together, in what ever is delivered from the pulpit. The important and glorious truths of the Gospel are to be continually urged, in order to influence the temper, and regulate the life. Here, then, two or three commodious divisions become exceedingly proper, as resting places to the soul, as affording materials which it can digest and reflect upon, for its private improvement. Hence will our

congregations receive substantial benefit : whereas vague essays and declamations, leave few traces in the mind, and make little or no impression upon the heart.

Suffer me to add a hint or two concerning the beginnings and the conclusions of our discourses. In the exordiums, some variety seems to be desirable. We may, for the most part, select a few remarks, not foreign to the subject, which may serve to introduce it in an agreeable and happy manner. The conclusions of our discourses I would wish to consist, as much as possible, of distinct applications; which may be so managed, as to have a considerable degree of diversity. Sometimes two or three useful truths may be deduced from the general doctrine of the text ; and sometimes as many practical remarks may be suggested. Sometimes there may be a forcible recapitulation of what has been advanced ; and no proper opportunity ought to be omitted of a pathetic address, warmly urging the great principles and duties that have been explained. It has been objected to distinct applications, that they lead to repetitions, and that they cannot be necessary when the main subject has been duly illustrated. But I am fully satisfied that they greatly contribute, at least in most of our societies, both to the acceptance and the usefulness of Ministers.

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With respect to the delivery of Sermons, I shall not descend to particular rules. I rejoice to see that the pronounciation and action of the pulpit are attended to; and that our younger brethren are likely in this respect to excel their predecessors. But, in the present taste of the age, it is of the utmost importance to guard against affectation. A theatrical manner is especially to be avoided, as being very contrary to the true simplicity, and real dignity, of the Christian Ministry. Let it be remembered, that pronounciation and action should arise from the subject, and not the subject from pronounciation and action. During the time of composition, a person ought not to think how his discourse is to be spoken. In writing, his understanding and his feelings alone should dictate what is proper to be said; and thence should his subsequent delivery arise. To introduce certain passages, for the sake of an exclamation, a start, or an attitude, is contemptible in the estimation of sound wisdom.

I cannot dismiss the consideration of the eloquence of the pulpit, without throwing in a few words concerning what, in my opinion, ought to be the subjects of our discourses. And the subjects of our discourses ought to be the great doctrines, duties, examples, assistances, promises, and prospects of the Gospel. I say, the great doctrines, duties, examples, assistances, promises, and

and prospects of the Gospel : for it should never be forgotten by us, that we are preachers of the Christian religion ; and it is strange that this should ever be forgotten by any who actually believe in the revelation of our blessed Saviour. The New Testament contains the whole display of the love of the only true God the Father to the degenerate children of Adam. It exhibits all the compassion and tenderness of Jesus. It holds forth a knowledge of the purest and noblest kind ; it conveys to us the pardon of our sins ; it communicates the principle of holiness ; it inspires us with resignation and fortitude ; and it spreads before us a boundless happiness. These mighty blessings it gives to creatures who were absolutely unworthy of them ; to creatures who were involved in ignorance and transgression ; who had no hope ; who were liable to final condemnation. It rescues us from the most deplorable of all calamities, and confers upon us the greatest possible felicity. Eternal death was our expected portion ; but eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. In communicating these benefits, the wisdom, truth, rectitude, and goodness of our heavenly Father are admirably portrayed, and the benevolence of the blessed Redeemer shines in full beauty and lustre. It shines in a thousand affecting situations and instances resulting from his actions, discourses, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension. All these must be acknowledged,

ledged, whatever particular system of opinions we embrace, provided we do actually believe in the supernatural original and authority of our holy religion. In every view of the matter, Christianity is to be regarded as an inestimable gift, as a pearl of unspeakable price. To be afraid, therefore, of expressing ourselves, in the highest terms, concerning the mercy of God in the Gospel; not to draw from the New Testament our principal instructions, arguments and motives, is treason against our great Master. We may lawfully make use of other assistances; we may select materials from various sources: nor is it necessary to be always introducing the name of Christ. But we must stand up in the pulpit as his Ministers. His truths, his laws, his life, his sanctions, we must display; upon his philanthropy and compassion we must insist; and speak under the powerful impression of that immortal salvation by him communicated.

I shall just add, that, in discharging the two positive institutions of Christianity, care should be taken that they are administered in a serious, edifying and devout manner; that no superstitious ideas of them be entertained; and that the true nature and design of them, as laid down in the New Testament, be attended to, and preserved.

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But is the duty of pastors and teachers confined to the pulpit, or to the performance of the immediate ordinances of religion? No, it extends to their private deportment towards the flocks committed to their charge. Permit me, therefore, in the second place, my worthy Brother, seriously and affectionately to represent to you, that, in this respect, it is of the utmost importance for you to know how to behave yourself in the House of God, the Church of the Living God. Every one must be sensible that a wicked, or even a very imprudent Minister, is a disgrace to his calling, and a destroyer of his usefulness. Every one must be sensible that there is a decorum belonging to the pastoral office; so that if a person who is engaged in it enters much into the customs and diversions of the world, he tarnishes the lustre of his reputation, lessens the respect he might have met with, and injures the success of his labours. I am not an advocate for a rigid preciseness: but there is a circumspection highly proper in the christian ministry, especially with regard to indulgences and pleasures which may not, perhaps, be strictly unlawful. There is a candid vigilance of character, which, while it preserves the becoming gravity of the divine, does not depart from a due cheerfulness and liberality of manners.

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Out of the many directions that might be given, I shall only touch upon a few hints respecting our more immediate conduct towards our congregations. Let me express my dislike of any mean and selfish policy. There are certain little arts which some have practised, and which I think unworthy to be mentioned in this place. Whatever they be, they ought to be entirely disregarded by the Minister of the Gospel. They are unsuitable to that simplicity and openness of character he should always maintain; and they are usually as unwise as they are disreputable.

What I would particularly recommend to you, is, not to meddle with the secular concerns of your hearers. Be not solicitous even to know them, and much less to give your advice with relation to them. As far as it is proper they will themselves acquaint you with them, if, in a course of time, they shall have formed such an opinion of your integrity and prudence, as to think your counsel desirable. It is not right to take an active part, unless we are requested to do it, in the secular concerns belonging to our congregations as such. In general, it will be better to leave affairs of that kind to the management of the deacons and trustees. I have known much uneasiness to arise from an imprudent interference in these matters.

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Another thing I would caution against, is, a suspicious and jealous disposition; an anxiety to hear what is said of us; and a readiness to take offence at slight matters, and to imagine that we are not treated with sufficient respect. This is a turn of mind which is fraught with many inconveniencies. Neglects will occur, in the commerce of life, that often are not intended; or which, at worst, do not proceed from evil designs; but from some accidental situations, or accidental varieties of temper. It is best to go on steadily in our own duty, without being solicitous to know how far we may be animadverted upon by weak and petulant persons, and without supposing that we shall be blamed by reasonable and worthy men.

There is an article of great importance, the visiting of our people, with regard to which I scarcely know what to say, or what rules to suggest; and upon which, therefore, I speak with peculiar diffidence. It is usually, I think, better to be sparing than frequent in it; though this is a maxim which may occasionally admit of much limitation and restriction; and perhaps too great a neglect of it is the fault which most prevails in the present day. The propriety of our conduct, must, in many cases, be directed by particular circumstances, of which good sense only can judge. To persons of some rank and fashion,
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(allowance being made for particular exceptions and friendships, which will occur in all societies) we should seldom go, unless invited; for this will commonly be most agreeable to themselves. As to others, it may be fit to call upon them without ceremony; but then our stay should be short. A due medium ought to be kept between an impertinent freedom and a stiff reserve. We should not forget to render our visits as useful as possible. Something should be thrown in for improvement; something that favours of religion; and this may frequently be done, with superior advantage, in an indirect than in a formal way.

There is one case, in which we may attend our people without waiting for being asked; and that is in seasons of peculiar affliction, and especially in the case of sickness. To call upon them in such situations, will be universally acceptable; and our repeated attendance and prayers will probably be affectionately received. No part, however, of our duty is more difficult than this. It requires our peculiar care, especially with respect to dying persons, that we do not go beyond the hopes and encouragements afforded by the doctrines and Terms of the Gospel.

I could wish to offer a few remarks on the true politeness of a minister; and the rather, as the subject hath considerably been misunderstood. It doth

not consist merely in certain fashionable forms of address and behaviour ; in the knowledge and practice of little current modes ; but in a respectful civility and ease, suited to our particular character. Suited, I say, to our particular character : for what may be proper and graceful in one station, may not be so in another. The politeness of a Minister, and the ease with which it is accompanied, ought to be tempered with that decency of reserve which becomes his profession ; and the want of attending to which, hath, in several instances, been productive of absurd airs, and a ridiculous affectation.

A right direction, in this respect, might be derived from a real knowledge of the world ; which, on many other accounts, is highly serviceable to a Minister ; though, like politeness, it is apt to be mistaken. What I understand by it is, such an insight into the tempers and characters of men, as is the parent of good sense ; and leads to a rectitude of conduct in the various occurrences of life. The advantages of this qualification would require much enumeration. It is a very different thing from what often assumes the name, and it is by no means easy of attainment ; being the result of large experience and observation, joined with a spirit of sagacity. It cannot, therefore, be expected in a young Minister, and allowance ought to be made for the
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want of it. In the mean time, he cannot greatly err, if he be possessed of modesty and decorum. These will supply the place of a knowledge of the world, and keep him from any flagrant improprieties of behaviour. With modesty and decorum for his guides, I may venture to foretel, that no young Minister will fall into any mistakes which shall materially hurt his reputation.

There is a third grand point, in which we ought to know how to behave ourselves in the House of God, in the Church of the living God; and that is, with regard to this Church considered as extending beyond our own Congregations; and including our fellow Christians in general. We ought to know how to behave ourselves towards neighbouring Ministers' and societies, towards the whole of our Dissenting Brethren, towards the Clergy of the establishment, and with respect to the grand interests of religion, and the cause of our divine Master. But this copious and important part of our subject must be entirely omitted. Neither can I enlarge on the exhortations and motives I could have wished to lay before you, in order to animate your fortitude in sustaining the difficulties you may expect to meet with, and in order to shew that your encouragements are superior to your trials. *

* It is the intention of the Author, if he should ever again be called to the like service, to consider the remainder of the subject.

I shall,

I shall, therefore, conclude with briefly beseeching and charging you in the name of God, in the name of Christ, as you regard your own honour, peace, and salvation, and as you value the souls committed to your care, that you zealously, and seriously, and constantly attend to the duties which lie upon you, in consequence of the solemn dedication you have this day made of yourself to the service of Jesus, and the welfare of immortal spirits. Retain, I entreat you, a deep sense of the importance and difficulty of the work in which you are engaged; such a sense of its importance and difficulty as shall make you humble and vigilant; as shall lead you to fervent prayer to God, that he would enable you to be faithful to the trust you have undertaken. In the exercise of supplication, humility, watchfulness, and diligence, you need not be discouraged. Though the business before you be weighty and arduous, you will be entitled, in the serious and active discharge of it, to many excellent supports. You may rejoice in the consciousness that you have chosen the noblest possible employment; the employment of endeavouring to instruct, reform, and save, the sinful children of Adam. You will have the pleasure of reflecting, that, though you are placed in a situation which doth not promise the emoluments and distinctions of the present world, you are supporting the cause of religious truth and liberty,
and

and the peculiar honour of your divine Master. To crown the whole, you will be sustained by the hope of an eternal reward, proportioned to your fidelity, industry, and zeal. An eternal reward! What a prospect, what an object is *that*? Yes; everlasting life and glory will be your portion, if you continue faithful and active in your duty: a consideration this, which renders all temporal views and interests absolutely contemptible. It is amazing that, when such a consideration is proposed, any should sacrifice their integrity for the advantages of a few years; for what can scarcely be called advantages, even in the present state. When we contrast the shortness of human life with an eternity of happiness, it is shameful that the least stress should be laid on a few worldly profits and honours, or that it should be thought a mighty matter to endure a few difficulties and sufferings. There is a wisdom, a good sense, in piety and virtue, and in adhering steadily to the dictates of conscience, that, one should imagine, every rational mind must clearly discern, and strongly feel. You, my worthy friend, have chosen the better part: and, with the motives, aids, and prospects before you, I trust that you will be enabled to go on in your work, with cheerfulness, vigour, and success. I pray God, that you and all of us may so approve our sincerity and diligence, as, at length, to receive the approbation of our great Master. AMEN.

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